MAX BEERBOHM:

AN APPRECIATION

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

THE EIGHTEEN-NINETIES AND "MAX"

That colorful period known (according to one's taste) as "the gay nineties", "the yellow nineties", "the decadent nineties", or "the romantic nineties", produced one of the most brilliant group of men England has ever brought forth in a single decade. Swinburne, Meredith, and Tennyson are among the older geniuses of the age, whilst Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, Frances Thompson, and Max Beerbohm are in the vanguard of the younger men.

The spirit of the age was one of curious revolt, which was in reality the beginning of our twentieth century modernism. Almost every great movement in art and literature which is today an accepted fact had its beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century--the impressionistic style of painting, which Whistler practised, with the derision of most of his contemporaries; the "new poetry" of Catholicism as exemplified by Frances Thompson; the "new fiction" of realism carried to such an extreme by Hardy, Moore, Zangwill, and Somerset Maugham; the "new urbanity" or artificiality of Wilde, Rothenstein, Whistler, and Beerbohm; the amazing development of the short story by such men as Kipling, Barrie, and Henry James; the romantic trend in fiction, as illustrated by Conrad, Stevenson, and Kipling. These represent the main tendencies of the period, which was one of experiment and adventure.

The true representative of the Decadents, Oscar Wilde, is the most severely criticized personality of the period, inasmuch as he was known to have "the courage of the opinions...of others",[1] and to have plagiarized every living writer of distinction. As one of the wits, Max Beerbohm, too, came in for his share of criticism.

But perhaps the most supreme example of the revolutionary spirit of the age was Aubrey Beardsley, whose bawdy drawings he himself, while on his deathbed, begged to have destroyed. His startling work in black and white was a radical departure from all traditions, and he had a diabolical delight in shocking his contemporaries with his daring designs. The chief aim of the younger set was "épater le bourgeoisie", and Beardsley, before he died at the age of twenty-six, succeeded in shocking the bourgeoisie more than any of his coevals.

"The Yellow Book Magazine", so symbolic of this period, ran through thirteen astounding volumes, from 1894 to 1897, each volume a treasure of art and literature. Most of the important men of the time contributed to its pages--George Bernard Shaw, Henry James, George Moore, Arthur Symons, Richard Le Gallienne, Max Beerbohm. There are numerous drawings reproduced from the work of Joseph Pennell, Walter Sickert, Will Rothenstein, Lawrence Housman, and, of course, Aubrey Beardsley. The audacious cover design of Beardsley and the sparkling conceits of Beerbohm made the début of "The Yellow Book Magazine" a memorable one. Each subsequent volume bore its own distinctive feature, but none quite equalled the brilliance of that first challenging gesture.

1 James M. Whistler--The Gentle Art of Making Enemies, P. 164. (London, 1904: Wm. Heinemann)

Max Beerbohm's "Defence of Cosmetics", an essay in the first number of "The Yellow Book Magazine", marks his début as a writer. He had already written while still at school, but this essay was his first notable achievement. "Max", (his nom de guerre as a caricaturist), although an undergraduate and only twenty-two years of age, had an immediate success. Righteous critics hastened to swoop upon him violently, and all who were not gloriously amused by his airy style and satiric humor were indignant at his defence of artifice.

Amazed at the seriousness with which "the affrighted mob took his hoax", which was intended as a frank "burlesque upon the 'precious' school of writers",[1] the sprightly Max was exceedingly bitter in his denunciations of the critics. He wrote in a letter to the editor of "The Yellow Book Magazine": ....."It is a pity that critics should show so little sympathy with writers, and curious when we consider that most of them tried to be writers themselves, once."[2] Bohun Lynch calls our attention to "that last venomous comma", which, he says, "is worth a page of invective and is entirely characteristic. We have heard of a life hanging by a thread, so why should not a charming little reputation depend upon a comma?"[3]

"Punch" printed one of the cleverest jibes at the young writer whose surprising skill was the envy of the young and the consternation of the old. The following verses appeared in an obscure corner of that comic sheet:

1 Max Beerbohm--Letter to the Editor of "The Yellow Book Magazine", Vol. 11.
2 " " "
3 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 23, 24. (London, 1921: Wm. Heinemann)

"How would the little busy bore
Improve on nature's dower,
And press a painted Laïs more
Than maidens in their flower?
How daintily he daubs on his grease,
How neatly spreads his wax;
And finds in dirty aids like these
The charm that nature lacks.
In barber-born, cosmetic skill
'Art' would be busy too;
And folly finds some business still
For popinjays to do!"[1]

Max Beerbohm was by birth and temperament perfectly equipped to be an aristocrat, an exquisite, "a dandy of the choicest kind."[2] He seems to have been born sophisticated. His earlier work reminds one of the "Wise Youth", Adrian, of "Richard Feverel", and of the raciness of Whistler. A photograph of "Max Minimus", (at the age of five or six years, one would judge), reveals the same quaint wisdom of later years. The small Max has all the promise of his maturity, even the pose, which is humorously Napoleonic. There is no doubt that Max was "to the manner born."

Born in London, on August 24th, 1872, the son of Julius E. Beerbohm and Eliza Draper, Max is the half-brother of the famous actor, Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree; educated at Charterhouse School

1 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 21.
2 " ———"———, P. 23.

and Merton College, Oxford, and an Hon. LL.D. of Edinburgh; subsequently a writer for the Harmsworth papers, "The Yellow Book Magazine", "Vanity Fair", "Pick-Me-Up", and innumerable other periodicals; a caricaturist of eminence. In 1895 Max visited the United States with Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree, and on his return, in a few months, succeeded George Bernard Shaw as dramatic critic of "The Saturday Review". In 1910 he married Florence Kahn, an American girl of Memphis, Tennesee. Max is a member of the Athenaeum Club in London. His home is "Villino Chiaro", Rapallo, on the Italian Riviera, where he has lived for a number of years, next door to Gordon Craig.

To date Max Beerbohm's works consist of five books of collected essays, one long novel, one play, a book of parodies, a book of short stories, "A Variety of Things", which is just what its title implies, "The Happy Hypocrite, A Tale for Tired Men", (an allegory), a number of uncollected essays which have appeared in various periodicals, and several books of caricatures. In addition to these, he has collected some reminiscences of Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree, under the title, "Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree: Some Memories of Him and of His Art". This is a large output for a man who claims to be nothing more than a "petit maître",[1] and who, at twenty-three years of age, announced his intention of retiring to make way for his juniors.

1 Max Beerbohm--More, "Ouida", P. 108. (London, 1899: John Lane, The Bodley Head).

Although Max, at the age of fifty-nine, is said to have "retired" at Rapallo, he makes sporadic incursions into the world of belles lettres. A very recent publication, "The New Keepsake", a sort of modern annual, with contributions by Aldous Huxley, Hugh Walpole, W. B. Yeats, Hilaire Belloc, and other contemporaries, includes an essay by Max Beerbohm--"Suppose", it is called. In addition to this, a new inexpensive edition of "Yet Again" has been printed recently; "The Works" and "More" have been combined in one volume; and one of the stories in "A Variety of Things" ("The Dreadful Dragon of Hay Hill"), has come out in a new, separate edition. There is also a new inexpensive edition of "Zuleika Dobson", and "The Happy Hypocrite" can be obtained in the small size of the "Little Blue Book" library.

In his collection of memories of Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree, Max gives us some intimate glimpses of his own youth. He tells us that he had already acquired the habit of drawing pictures in 1879, at the age of five. "I drew and painted--especially painted.....The subjects I chose were soldiers, policemen, cottages, and knights in armor"[1], he writes, and acknowledges that even at this early age he was a Conservative.

Sir Herbert was nineteen years older than Max, who was inordinately fond of him and envious of his seniority. When

1 Max Beerbohm--Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree: Some Memories of Him and of His Art, P.189. (London, no date: Hutchinson & Co. Second Edition).

Sir Herbert went to dinner at the Routledges, across the street, on Sunday night, Max would gaze at the windows opposite; and he admits that much as he "pitied Herbert for being so unlikely now to go to Heaven", he was "also envying him not a little, too".[1] He wanted "to grow up quickly and belong (on week-days), to the great world in which Herbert was moving".[1]

Max's father, a corn merchant with minor literary ambitions, started a journal, "The Evening Corn Trade List", which only recently went out of existence. There were two eldest sons, Ernest and Julius. Both graduated as clerks in their father's office, but none stayed there. Ernest became a sheep-farmer in Cape Colony; Julius explored Patagonia and "wrote a delightful book about it".[2] Julius also wrote "as good poetry as Max's prose",[3] if we are to believe Frank Harris.

Max betrayed a sense of humor even at the age of nine, when brother Herbert took his small brother to visit a well-known actress. A certain "immense gentleman" was present, to whom the little Max took an instant dislike, because he laughed at the smallness of "Herbert Tree's brother".[4] Max was "just old enough to think of saying, and just too well-brought up to say", that he "might as well laugh at the bigness of Herbert Tree's friend".[5]

1 Max Beerbohm--Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree: Some Memories of Him and of His Art, P. 202.
2 " " " "
3 FrankHarris--Contemporary Portraits, Fourth Series, P. 132. (New York, 1923: Brentano's)
4 Max Beerbohm--Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree: Some Memories of Him and of His Art, P. 191.
5 " " , P. 192.

In later years, Sir Herbert and Max went everywhere together. Max writes modestly: "It was a great thing to me, the love that I knew in my heart he had for me in his. I do believe he took as much pride in my little career as I took in his big one."[1] Before long, indeed, Max was as famous as his half-brother, and "announced his intention of publishing a series of 'Brothers of Celebrities', the first subject to be his well-known actor-brother".[2]

William Rothenstein, a contemporary artist, Aubrey Beardsley, and Beerbohm formed one of a trio of Decadents who were warm friends and staunch admirers each of the other's work. Rothenstein, who met most of the distinguished men of the time, gives us an intimate picture of Max, who, he says, had a baby face, heavily-lidded eyes, light gray in color, remarkable, thick, long eyelashes, a broad forehead, sleek, black hair parted in the middle, and "coming to a queer, curling point at the neck, and a quiet and finished manner". Max was "rather tall, carefully dressed, slender-fingered, with an assurance and experience unusual in one of his years".[3]

Rothenstein describes a visit to Max at breakfast, when the latter was an undergraduate at Oxford, living in a very diminutive house. His room, papered in blue, was hung with Pellegrini prints from "Vanity Fair", and some caricatures which, he said, were his own. Max seemed very pleased when Rothenstein remarked: "But they are brilliant."[3]

1 Max Beerbohm--Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree: Some Memories of Him and of His Art, P. 200.
2 Ella H. Dixon--As I Knew Them, P. 252.(London,1930:Hutchinson & Co.)
3 William Rothenstein--Men and Memories, P.144. (New York, 1931: Coward-McCann, Inc.).

Max kept aloof from all activities at Oxford, rarely attending a lecture. Yet he seemed to know everything that went on. He took no exercise except paddling a canoe occasionally. "Unusual wisdom and sound judgment he disguised under the harlequin cloak of his wit. He always declared he had read nothing--only 'The Four Georges' and Lear's 'Book of Nonsense'--and later, Oscar Wilde's 'Intentions', which he thought were beautifully written."[1]

While still an undergraduate, Max had already attained a reputation "as an essayist and wit of polish and as early as 1892 the "Strand Magazine" had published in obscure pages in three different months thirty-six 'Club Types', drawn by H. Maxwell Beerbohm. From boyhood he had been fond of making sketches of friends, not from life but imaginatively from memory. He says that he read a great deal of Bergson and Schopenhauer and it was from the latter he learned the art of humor, which he portrays both in his caricatures and in his essays."[2]

Frank Harris, who was editor of "The Saturday Review" when Beerbohm succeeded Shaw as dramatic critic in 1898, gives a detailed description of Max's appearance at that time, and adds: ".....He certainly had his own credos--ethics of social behavior, aesthetic and literary tastes--all testifying to the singularity

1 William Rothenstein--Men and Memories, P. 146.
2 Living Authors, A Book of Biographies, edited by "Dilly Tante", P. 27. (New York, 1931: The H. W. Wilson & Co.)

of his likes and dislikes. Whatever was odd,attracted him especially; by some fine instinct he was aware that nature reveals her secrets in her abnormalities."[1] Harris believed that Max had "the desire of the genius to see things as they are and to be witty through wisdom".[2]

When in 1921 Max incurred the indignation of the English public for certain caricatures of the royal family and was accused of lèse-majesté, Ella Hepworth Dixon wrote an article in the "Westminster Gazette", defending him, as follows:

"He is not the violent perpetrator of lèse-majesté depicted in the papers, but a singularly amiable and amusing young man, who took London by storm in the eighteen-nineties, and has remained young ever since.....When he joined the young lions of 'The Saturday Review' he had beautiful manners, long, curling eyelashes, the most wonderful clothes,and a habit of offering subtle compliments to women.....His calm, his serenity, were amazing. He was never in a hurry, and it is impossible to visualize him running full speed after a 'bus, like our hefty youth of today. But his gesture in hailing a handsome-cab, with a 'clouded cane', would have been perfect. For Max was soon a dandy of some importance as to be able to set the fashion among the young bloods."[3]

1 Frank Harris--Contemporary Portraits, Fourth Series, P. 128.
2 " " , P. 129.
3 Current Opinion, Aug. 1923. An anonymous reviewer quotes this passage from the "Westminster Gazette".

By this time Max had outgrown his youthful bitterness toward the critics, who had first condemned his "Defense of Cosmetics", and when they called him "vulgar", he replied: "Vulgarity has its uses--vulgarity often cuts ice which refinement scrapes at vainly."[1] It was the first time the epithet had been applied to Max, the elegant, the exquisite, and he found it refreshing.

For years Max has been an expatriate in Rapallo, living there since his marriage, in 1910. He is as much as a dandy as ever, we are told by the few who visit him. He "walks in his terrace like a grandee aboard his galleon".[2] The terrace, which is tiled marble, black and white, has a balustrade facing the sea. Behind are the mountains. Within the house the walls are painted blue, just as were the walls of Beerbohm's room at Oxford, and at his home in London. A single shelf surrounds the room, filled with books. "As slim and trim as a line in a Max cartoon or essay"[2], the writing-desk stands in the centre of the room.

Cecil Roberts, poet and literary critic, visiting Max at Rapallo, relates that Whenever Max was "too devastating in his analytical mirth--for he is a matchless caricaturist in his speech as well as pencil--Mrs. Beerbohm reproved him.....It was plain to see that he enjoyed being naughty; he stuck his stiletto

1 New Republic, July 6, 1921. Beerbohm's letter in reply to a critic.
2 Living Age, Feb. 3, 1923. Cecil Roberts--"Finding Max".

through literary reputations with the skill and delight of an entomologist sticking pins through another species of butterflies..... The clear conception of relative values underlying his caricatures, the balance of humor and judgment in his prose, these gifts were displayed in his talk."[1]

Although Ella Dixon finds Max's caricatures caustic, yet she believes that "his talk is urbane, like his essays, rather than devastating, like his drawings. Yet even with his pencil, he has little malice for persons. It is the type which arouses his mirth."[2]

W. Graham Robertson, an artist of the 'nineties, knew Max intimately and declares that he has "the kindliest and mostly strictly disciplined tongue"[3] of all the witty men he has ever met, amongst whom were Whistler, Wilde and other persifleurs of the 'nineties. Further, he considers Max "the perfect companion", because he always parts from him with the impression that he, himself, has been "brilliantly amusing. He is the most generous of wits; he not only casts pearls before swine, but actually gives the swine the credit for their production."[3]

The real Max has many antipathies, which he reveals slowly in his essays. He has a personality as distinct as that of Charles Lamb or of the eccentric Whistler, yet with an added spice not to be found in the one and a human tolerance foreign to the other. His is a personality quiet, humorous, erudite,and thoughtful, sometimes

1 Living Age, Feb.3, 1923. Cecil Roberts--"Finding Max".
2 Ella H. Dixon--As I Knew Them, P. 251.
3 W. Graham Robertson--Time Was, P. 310. (London, 1931: Hamish Hamilton, Ltd.)

bitter, seldom malicious, always refreshing and fascinating.

Max takes his place among other "British Institutions"[1], such as Parliament, afternoon tea, Dean Inge, and the Oxford accent--Max, "the irrepressible, the light of touch, the inimitable, the insouciant, and the impertinent"[1], and, as Shaw has dubbed him, "the incomparable Max"[2].

1 Living Authors, P. 27.
2 The Saturday Review, May 21, 1898. G. B. S.--"Valedictory".

CHAPTER 11

THE ESSAY

Among the most prominent modern essayists are Max Beerbohm, Hilaire Belloc, Cunninghame-Graham, Arthur Symons, E. V. Lucas, and George Moore. "While all these can be noted for quality--which is, indeed, the fundamental of successful essay-writing, and for free and unbounded use of personality as a mode of expression, each is also markedly individual in content, tastes, and style. Of them all, Max Beerbohm would be judged by common consent the most admirable in style and perhaps at the same time the least characteristic of the present age."[1]

Max has the ideal equipment for the informal essayist--a variety of whims, preferences, and prejudices; a consuming interest in people; a wide knowledge gleaned from extensive reading; an astonishing memory for both personal anecdotes and second-hand tales; a sense of humor so rare and delicious that it dances irresistibly through almost every phrase; and a style which is so suave, so urbane and so finished that it is an especial delight in itself. When added to these invaluable qualities, Max is blessed with a wit that is incorrigible and an egotism that is never obtrusive but always diverting, we have such an essayist as is born

1 Manly and Rickert--Contemporary British Literature, P. 50, 51. (New York, 1921: Harcourt, Brace & Co.)

only once in a century. The early nineteenth century had Charles Lamb; we have Max Beerbohm.

Undoubtedly, Max's lineal ancestors are chiefly Lamb and Addison. He himself points out "how much less human"[1] he is than Lamb. The quiet urbanity of his style resembles that of Addison, although the careful love of le mot juste, which sometimes smacks of pedantry, is a true characteristic of the eighteen-nineties.

Max is "our aristocrat of humor".[2] He "took incredible pains to be the most gentlemanly and the most elusive of humorists, descending from Charles Lamb and Thackeray; and he might almost call Andrew Lang uncle."[3] Max is "a cultured humorist. He can always amuse the stalls, never the gallery. Thackeray is on his shelves, but Dickens--I doubt it!"[4]

Max admits that he too, like "the sedulous ape", imitated the styles of others, but these others were contemporary writers, and his object was to learn rather "what to avoid".[5] His early habit of writing Latin prose and Latin verse influenced his style somewhat, although there is not the slightest hint of ponderousness in his smooth prose. Whatever the work behind his style, we cannot see in it the "fidgety, uninspired person, unable to begin a piece of writing"[6] before knowing how it will end.

1 Max Beerbohm's Letter to Bohun Lynch, in the Preface of "Max Beerbohm in Perspective", by Bohun Lynch.
2 C. Lewis Hind--Authors and I, P. 39. (London, 1921: John Lane, The
3 " " , P. 39. Bodley Head).
4 " " , P. 43.
5 Max Beerbohm--Note to "A Christmas Garland".
6 Max Beerbohm--Seven Men, P. 181, "Savanarola Brown". (Max is referring to himself.) (London, 1919: William Heinemann)

That Max is "a very serious and hardworking artist"[1] can be testified by few, for he has allowed few the privilege of seeing him at work. C. Lewis Hind is one of the privileged, and he describes how Max composed his dramatic articles for "The Saturday Review":

"He would write, through spacious mornings, on cream laid paper, in large important calligraphy--and the erasures? Ah, the erasures! They were blacked out with an artistic blackness that a war-time censor might have envied. And why? Because the artistic heart of Max would not allow even the printer or the printer's reader to guess at the toil that went to a perfect paragraph."[2]

The outstanding virtues of the essays are a certain gentle, amused tolerance of the weakness and discrepancies of mankind; an indefatigable delight in books and everything pertaining to books, a keen interest in costume and the psychology of clothes, and above all, a persistent vein of subtle, unvenomous satire. Whether he reminiscences sentimentally on the eighteen-eighties, ("To give an accurate and exhaustive account of that period would need a far less brilliant pen than mine"[3]); or perpetrates a convincing hoax upon us in the form of "Kolniyatsch", ("a spoof account of the very latest thing in continental authors"[4]), Beerbohm is always a sophisticated satirist.

1 C. Lewis Hind--Authors and I, P. 41.
2 " " , P. 41.
3 Max Beerbohm--The Works, P. 56,("1880"). (London, 1896: John Lane)
4 Books and Authors--Robert Lynd. (London, 1922: Richard Cobden-Sanderson) P. 163.

Each essay is a small gem in its perfection, combining "exquisiteness of detail with strictness of design".[1] When Beerbohm writes on "Dandies and Dandies",[2] in an early essay, besides discussing dandyism in general, he takes pains to evoke a vivid picture of that prince of dandies, Beau Brummell. And in a later essay on the laughter of the public,[3] he gives what is essentially a scientific treatise on the causes of laughter.

Although his subjects are many and varied, his world is a narrow one. He has not the breadth of conception of Thackeray or the imagination and broad humanity of Lamb. Of these limitations he is fully aware, and has given the best resume of his own talents.[4] In a letter to Bohun Lynch, he writes: "My gifts are small. I've used them very well and discreetly, never straining them; and the result is that I've made a charming little reputation." And in one of his own essays,"Ouida", he calls himself "a dilettante", one who loves best "delicate and elaborate ingenuities of form and style."[5]

For Beerbohm the essay has a very malleable form; he makes of it a story, a memoir, or a satire. "The real Max Beerbohm is an essayist pure and simple,the essay being the inevitable medium for the expression of his urbane and civilized genius."[6] When he writes a story or a parody, he is not departing from the essay; he is merely extending it.

1 New Republic, May 17, 1922, Philip Littell.
2 Max Beerbohm--The Works, published in 1896.
3 Max Beerbohm--Yet Again, " " 1909.
4 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, Preface.
5 Max Beerbohm--More, P. 108.
6 Holbrook Jackson--The Eighteen-Nineties, P. 149. (New York, 1914, M. Kennerley.)

Max is the dandy of English literature. The sartorial daintiness of his person extends to the elegance and exquisiteness of his prose. He avoids excessive and violent emotions. He is never wrathful or rancorous; even when he is malicious or spiteful, he never forgets to be politely so. "The Case of Prometheus"[1], though pointedly satirical, yet in delicacy and elegance is the essence of artificiality and civilized art. "The House of Commons Manner"[2] is a scathing criticism on the dufferdom of its members, but the language never becomes virulent. "A Home-Coming"[3] ridicules the backbone of England--its average citizen--with the most delicate insistence.

There is an unmistakeable continuity of style from his debut in "The Yellow Book Magazine", in 1894, to the present day, although each volume of essays has its own individual character. The earliest collection, which bears the pretentious, amusing title, "The Works of Max Beerbohm", published in 1896, is marked by greater spontaneity than "And Even Now", which came out in 1920. One is tempted to re-read few essays in the latter, whereas in "The Works" every essay is a little masterpiece which defies the snipper of quotations--from the first audacious "Pervasion of Rouge"[4] to the youthful writer's account of his first year at Oxford[5], wherein he bids farewell to his public, ("Cedo junioribus!"), at the age of twenty-three.

1 Max Beerbohm--More.
2 " --Yet Again
3 " "
4 " The Works. First printed in "The Yellow Book Magazine" under the title, "A Defence of Cosmetics".
5 " The Works,"Diminuendo ".

The modern reader is struck by the topical essay, "The Pervasion of Rouge", which is "curiously prophetic of the lipstick age which was soon to follow but had not yet arrived",[1] but which is now here.

Writing on the aestheticism of the eighteen-eighties, in 1894, Beerbohm recaptures all the gay artifice and sentiment of that period. He reviews the art, politics, and popular beauties of the time--for "beauty existed" then, and "Oscar Wilde managed her debut".[2]

Another essay in "The Works", entitled "King George 1V", is as comical and as vivid a picture of that opulent monarch as is Shakespeare's Falstaff. There are humorous contrasts between the freedom of the old manners and the restrictions of the new. Nowadays, says Beerbohm, "we are not strong enough to be wicked, and the Noncomformist Conscience makes cowards of us all."[3] He cannot resist a sly thrust at the democracy of modern royalty: "Though he (George 1V) does not appear to have treated his inferiors with the extreme servility that is now in vogue....." and "we who have come at length to look upon stupidity as one of the most sacred prerogatives of Royalty....."[4]

A second volume of essays, "More", came out in 1899. Here Beerbohm indulges in a greater variety of moods, from the mock-serious to the sentimental. He has more to say of royalty, but he is not critical this time; he drops his mocking tone and sympathizes with the prince whose life knows no fears and therefore

1 Richard Le Gallienne--The Romantic Nineties, P. 231. (Garden City, N.Y., 1925:Doubleday, Page and Co.)
2 Max Beerbohm--The Works, "1880", P. 55.
3 " " , "George 1V", P. 94.
4 " " " , P. 96.

"no reciprocity, no endeavor, no salt of life."[1] It is, to Beerbohm, the uncertainty of life that makes it so wonderful.

Beerbohm is a true aristocrat, never at heart desirous of reform. Though he deplores monarchy and pities monarchs, he believes that if "the dream of the doctrinaire" were put into practice, it would "soon turn to some such nightmare as modern France and modern America. Indeed, fallacies and anomalies are at the basis of all good government."[2] The institution of the Royal Family is the best way for the English public to work off its patriotic emotion. In Russia this energy seems to be worked off by upsetting other current governments, he observes. He analyzes the idolatrous instinct in all mankind--the same which made the Children of Israel bow before brazen images.

Realizing the ordeal of the Royal Family in acting as objects of worship, Beerbohm humorously suggests lightening their labors by the use of wax automata made in their images! This essay is a typical Beerbohm pot-pourri--a mélange of the serious and the philosophical, banter and satire.

The startling experience of viewing a number of wax-works is described in the essay, "Madame Tussaud". The writer's horror is not an aesthetic shudder that results from seeing sensational figures in life-like reproduction; it is the resentment of the artist who understands the fundamental principles of art and sees these principles crudely violated. He feels that true art

1 Max Beerbohm--More, "Some Words on Royalty", P. 5.
2 " " " , P. 10, 11.

never attempts to go beyond the limits set by its medium, nor seeks to give the illusion of real life; it makes use of its medium with the strictest adherence to its limitations. The difference between statuary and the waxen image is the difference between the permanent symbolic expression of a soul and the ephemeral likeness. The statue, as Pater pointed out, moves us to emotion, "not by accumulation of detail, but by abstracting from it".[1] Beerbohm reflects that "the wax-works fail because they are not made within any of those exquisite limitations of color, texture, and proportion to which all visual arts should be subjected".[1] Simply and succintly Beerbohm states an axiom of aesthetics which has been subjected to devious treatments: "Life, save only through conventions, is inimitable. The more clearly it be aped, the more futile and unreal its copy."[2]

The essay on "Ouida" is a piece of fine literary criticism. Beerbohm inquires why "art, in a writer.....implies certain limitations".[3] The most vital writers are not artistic, he states; they cannot take time to be so. Beerbohm's examples are masterly--Meredith, who "packs tight all his pages with wit, poetry and psychological analysis" and whose "obscurity, like that of Carlyle and Browning, is due less to extreme subtlety than to plethoric abundance of his ideas....."; Swinburne, whose "rhapsodies.....are so overwhelmingly exuberant in their expression that no ordinary reader can cope with them....."[4]

1 Max Beerbohm--More, "Madame Tussaud", P. 42.
2 " " " "
3 " " , "Ouida", P. 107.
4 " " " P. 108.

This is a favorite theory with Beerbohm, which he uses again, with other examples, in his dramatic criticism. Shakespeare is his best example; the great dramatist took his plots from many sources, but modelled them into masterpieces. Even in Beerbohm's parodies, one can see this theory at work. The parody on George Bernard Shaw in "A Christmas Garland", called "A Straight Talk", presumably a Shaw preface, is a mock argument for the genius who took a trite story, stiffened it with his "civistic conscience" and made it "a masterpiece".[1]

Scattered throughout Beerbohm's essays one finds comments and appreciations of George Meredith, for whom he had an immoderate admiration. The influence of the older man is manifest in much of Beerbohm's work. Although Meredith is a Titan compared with Beerbohm, the satire of the latter partakes of the same pervasive, comedic flavor. Meredith's world is a vaster, more profound one, but the Comic Muse hovers throughout the work of both. Both men are artists' artists, achieving in their separate spheres a ripe, rare perfection best appreciated by fellow artists.

Beerbohm delights in writing about the little old music hall, which is fading into the past. The theme occurs again and again in his essays, always expressing the same regret for the

1 A Christmas Garland, "A Straight Talk", P.159. (London, 1921: William Heinemann)

passing of the old entertainment. "The Blight on the Music Halls" laments that this old-time stock form of amusement has given way to something that not only demands all one's attention, but "is even most exigent" of one's "aesthetic faculties".[1] The writer complains that there is no relaxation in this new mode. "The restfulness of a fatuous convention"[2] --the old music hall, with its vulgarity and monotony--has been superseded by something much too clever to be restful.

A keen piece of criticism of contemporary cartoonists[3] proves that Beerbohm's bitterness towards the critics has not altogether disappeared. "In these days of feverish questing, when not to have discovered at least one new genius every month is as much as an art critic's place is worth"[4]--such is his splenetic statement.

A strikingly Addisonian essay is the one entitled "At Covent Garden". But for its modern phraseology, it might have been culled from "The Spectator" itself. One is instantly reminded of Addison at the Italian Opera. Like Addison, Beerbohm is amused at the scene, the inconsequential chatter, and the boxes which are to him "like an exquisite panorama of Punch and Judy shows".[5] "The incidental music",[5] as he calls the opera, is played while the human comedy goes on uninterrupted,

1 More, "The Blight on the Music Halls", P. 122.
2 " " , P. 123, 124.
3 " , "A. B." (Alfred Bryan), P. 162.
4 " "

nor does the fiddlers' noise drown the chattering. Like Lamb, Beerbohm admits his indifference to serious music.

An extremely erudite and diverting essay, "The Case of Prometheus", examines the circumstances and history of Prometheus, the mythological hero who stole fire from the gods to give it to mankind. The essay is written in the serio-comic vein which is Beerbohm's most successful affectation. He tells us that he is inspired by the account of a traveller--one Mr. Richard Mitchell, known as most reliable and prosaic--who claims to have seen Prometheus bound to a lofty and inaccessible peak of Mount Caucasus. After carefully establishing the honesty of the traveller, Beerbohm proves, by reductio ad absurdum, the improbability of the story. The essay is another hoax like "Kolniyatsch", but much more brilliant nonsense, and with an added element of fantasy. Beerbohm concludes that he will rescue Prometheus and thus save "not merely...Russia, but...the whole civilized world"[1] from disgrace.

The extraordinary brilliance of the second volume of Beerbohm's essays, "More", is sustained almost throughout. A letter to the author from Sir Edmund Gosse, written in April, 1899, just after the publication of "More", expresses the

1 More, "The Case of Prometheus", P. 200.

writer's delight in the new book:

"I weigh this little book against its predecessor, and I am astonished at the growth from the petulant, amusing, clever boy to the finished man.....A little essay of yours is a sonnet, really; no one turns out the "sonnet sans défaut" every time..... You are now a finished master in the form of your best groups of phrases.....Your constructions, at their best, have now become miraculously characteristic, in their solidity and lightness. You have an instrument quite your own, and you know how to use it."[1]

The third volume of essays, "Yet Again", appeared in 1909, and represents a collection selected from numerous publications. The book marks a transition point between "the brilliant boyish nonsense of his early days to the more brilliant but mature nonsense, and much more than nonsense, of his later work."[2]

The opening essay is somewhat disappointing. For once the sprightly Max surprises us; "The Fire" is ruminative, reminiscent, and--yes, it is dull. Beerbohm muses over the savagery of fire as contrasted with the other elements--earth, air, and water--all of which have been subjected to man, while fire alone remains unsubdued.

1 Hon. Evan Charteris, K.C.--The Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse, (London, 1931: Wm.Heinemann Ltd.) P. 260, 261.
2 Bohun Lynch--"Max Beerbohm in Perspective", P. 47.

The second essay is as dull as the first. The writer tells of his embarrassment "On Seeing People Off" at railway stations, until a well-known actor, employed as a professional "seer-off"[1], promises to teach him that valuable art. It is all rather strained persiflage and jars the reader with its too conscious humor.

The variable Max redeems himself, however, by giving us a delectable divertissement in "Porro Unum". Reflecting on the graceful custom of every monarch in paying a round of visits to his neighbors, he suggests that King Edward (then reigning) visit that hitherto neglected neighbor, Switzerland. He draws up an elaborate program of entertainment for the King in Switzerland, which includes a visit to "the principal factory of cuckoo-clocks"[2] and the National Gallery, "a hall filled with picture post-cards....."[2]

"The Decline of the Graces" deplores the passing of the nineteenth century art of fine manners, and proclaims the writer "on the grandmothers' side.....On the banner that I wave is embroidered a device of prunes and prisms"[3]. This is another defence of artifice, and might well be Beerbohm's

1 Max Beerbohm--Yet Again, "On Seeing People Off", P. 25. (London, 1910: Chapman & Hall Ltd., Seventh Edition)
2 " --Yet Again, "Porro Unum", P. 46, 47.
3 " " , "The Decline of the Graces, P. 95.

standard. He makes a plea for the return of the Graces, not only for a "sociological reason"[1], (for he thinks there would be more marriages if ladies took to swooning again), but "first and last, on aesthetic grounds. Let the Graces be cultivated for their own sweet sake."[1]

The essay on "Whistler's Writing" is a monumental tribute to that writer, and is also one of the best in the volume, "Yet Again". Whistler's writing, "like himself", says Beerbohm, was necessarily "cosmopolitan and eccentric.....It was, in fact, an Autolycine style. It was a style of the maddest motley, but.....a gracious harmony for all beholders."[2] There is an unforgettable simile, which would have delighted Whistler himself: "Whistler's insults always stuck--stuck and spread round the insulted, who found themselves at length encased in them, like flies in amber."[3] This simile recalls a letter which Beerbohm wrote a few years before, about 1896, to William Rothenstein, referring to John Lane, the publisher, as "that poor fly in the amber of modernity."[4] Like most great men, Beerbohm is nothing loth to quote himself when the moment is propitious.

1 Yet Again, "The Decline of the Graces", P. 101.
2 " , "Whistler's Writing", P. 116.
3 " " , P. 119.
4 William Rothenstein--Men and Memories, P. 165. The date of this letter is not given, but judging by its context, it seems to have been written about the year 1896.

In "General Elections", Beerbohm affects an amusing pose of complete ignorance of all political affairs. "The idea of the British Empire leaves me quite cold. If this or that subject race threw off our yoke, I should feel less vexation than if one comma were misplaced in the printing of this essay!"[1] We cannot be sure that Max is not pulling our leg here, for while his caricatures of contemporary political personalities and events show a knowingness far beyond the presumably enlightened, his aloofness from matters of state confirms his indifference.

A departure from Beerbohm's usual style and subject-matter, "A Morris for May-Day", is an interesting history of this traditional English folk-dance, and relates some amusing anecdotes concerning its performance. The facetious Max confesses that when he first saw this dance, tears came to his eyes. "My critics have often complained to me that I lack 'heart'--presumably the sort of heart that is pronounced with a rolling of the r; and I suppose they are right. I remember having read the death of Little Nell on more than one occasion without floods of tears."[2]

1 Yet Again, "General Elections", P. 149.
2 " , "A Morris for May-Day", P. 169.

A decidedly matter-of-fact inquiry into the causes of "The Humour of the Public" gives a scientific analysis of these causes. Beerbohm believes that although no one is without a sense of humor (a most gratifying reassurance), yet each sense is different. According to him, we differ from the animals only in our ability to laugh. The public (which he calls "that vast number of human animals who are in the lowest grade of intelligence")[1] cannot perceive a joke unless it hits them in the eye. Naming the sources of their humor as the comic papers and the music halls chiefly, Beerbohm gives himself another opportunity to linger on his favorite theme--the old music hall. He rhapsodizes on their monotony, which is the secret of their success. He knows less about the comic papers, but he has made a careful examination of some hundreds of these and is horrified by the amount of labor put into them. He finds variations on the same themes, here too, and gives a lengthy list (which he considers exhaustive) of these themes. Some of the items on the list are amusing: mothers-in-law, twins, old maids, fatness, baldness, sea-sickness, bad cheese. He can understand and explain all these, except one--bad cheese, which

1 Yet Again, "The Humor of the Public", P. 252.

baffles him. The two elements in the public's humor, he discovers, are delight in suffering and contempt for the unfamiliar; the former being the stronger. Max definitely proves himself to be a scientific humorist.

As a spectator who is interested primarily in his fellow-creatures, Beerbohm likes nothing better than to visit the law-courts,which, he points out, are superior in entertainment to the theatre in that they offer the material of life itself. He suggests using trial-scenes, or rather "scenes from famous trials"[1] for plays. Here we see that he has anticipated a vogue of the past decade, already outmoded.

Nine little essays, "Words for Pictures", are tacked on at the end of "Yet Again". These essays are themselves lovely word-pictures, re-creating for the reader the very spirit of the pictures which inspired them. And yet, for all their loveliness, one feels that they are superfluous and almost "gushing". Perhaps this feeling arises from the realization that Max is doing (though he does it superlatively well) what so many lesser men have done so badly. Enthusiastic art critics too often attempt to describe in their own inadequate words the emotions which they think the painter tries to express.

1 Yet Again, "Dulcedo Judiciorum", P. 268.

Nothing is more dissatisfying than an effort to explain one art in terms of another. It is as if a musician were to harangue his hearers about a composition without playing it for them. In these days of verbose commentators, annotators, and radio announcers, we cannot see the thing itself under its encrustation of well-meaning appreciation.

Some of the "Words for Pictures" are used cleverly for Beerbohm's own ideas. Writing on "Ho-Tei", a painting by Hokusai, Beerbohm indulges in a witty panegyric on fatness. He thinks Ho-Tei must have been a hermit--"one not more affable than Diogenes, yet wiser than he,.....and finding...the honest man without emerging from his own tub."[1] Ho-Tei is the Chinese god of little children and bears many other titles. His fatness is not repulsive, says Beerbohm, "it is the beauty of real fatness--that fatness which comes from within, and reacts on the soul that made it, until soul and body are one deep harmony of fat;.....which makes a man selfish because there is so much of him,and venerable because he seems to be a knoll of the very globe we live on, and lazy inasmuch as the form of government under which he lives is an absolute gastrocracy--the belly tyrannizing over the members whom it used to serve, and wielding its power as unscrupulously as none but a promoted slave could."[2]

1 Yet Again, "Words for Pictures", P. 311.
2 " " , P. 312.

Edmund Gosse's remark concerning Beerbohm's essays applies particularly to these "Words for Pictures": "They are winged things which seem too aery in their flight to be called essays, like those of Addison, of Hazlitt, or of Mr. Lucas. They are the humming-birds of literature".[1]

If "Yet Again" contained much that was dull and frequent sparks of those "delicate impertinences"[2] of yore, the next volume, "And Even Now" was a surprise. Among the twenty essays in the latter, at least five stand out as veritable masterpieces. This collection, on the whole, shows a maturer, more subdued Beerbohm, mellow, sympathetic, yet with the same humor. The sentiment of which we already had a glimmering in "Yet Again", is frankly and unashamedly evident in "And Even Now".

The essayist is now more interested in people than ever before, and is even finding something interesting in the commonplace. In fact, he seems more human, if less brilliant. He is not guilty of platitudes, but of "eternal verities very nicely put".[3] He remains the satirist, of course, but becomes something more of a critic, not only of literature and literary men, but of life in its more ordinary aspects.

"William and Mary" stands alone in all Beerbohm's work--a lovely, imperishable bit of sentiment, an unique creation of

1 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, Preface, P.xi.
2 " " , P. 26.
3 " " , P. 84.

the author. Philip Littell remarked that "an almost intelligent" person was convinced by "William and Mary" that "Max Beerbohm's heart was in the right place"[1], and although we may have had no doubts about that, this essay shows a tenderness hitherto unrevealed.

Ostensibly, "William and Mary" sets out to be a satirical portrait of an undergraduate Socialist--the only Socialist which Oxford possessed in 1890. William would groan because he had a comfortable income "all out of dividends"[2] and aver that "marriage was an anti-social anachronism".[2] Five years later, Beerbohm meets him--married to the most winsome little wife, quite conventionally settled, and a journalist. Their tiny cottage is as orderly and neat as Mary herself, whose adoration of William as a man of genius is beautifully touching to Beerbohm. For William writes--everything, plays,novels, all unsuccessful, but which meet with Mary's ardent approval. Mary dies in bearing a child, which also dies. William, broken in spirit, goes to fight in the Boer War, and, mercifully, is killed. Some years later, Beerbohm makes a pilgrimage to the

1 New Republic, May 17,1922.
2 And Even Now, "William and Mary", P. 269. (London, 1920: William Heinemann)

little cottage. The dear, remembered voices echo everywhere, amid the dust and decay. He lingers thoughtfully, reflecting on the evanescence of human things. He rings the door-bell; the faint tinkle is curiously, eerily like Mary's laughter--that "bell-like euphony"[1] he used to love. Again and again he rings, "lost in wonder.....tenaciously, vehemently",[2] recalling the fragrance of that vanished presence, evoked by the sound of the bell.

The essay, written in the first person, is infinitely more than a reminiscence; it is an unforgettable story. William and Mary, the two pathetic little people whose story is so tenderly told, are the most alive, most lovable people of all Beerbohm's world.

The writer does not recapture this mood, though another form of perfection is achieved in his reminiscence on Swinburne. "No.2, the Pines", once read, is not only never forgotten, but imprints a picture of Swinburne which stands out more clearly than all others read before or since. Frank Harris considers this essay perhaps "the truest and most intimate portrait of Swinburne ever printed in words"[3], and Edmund Gosse has quoted Beerbohm conspicuously in his "Biography of Swinburne".

1 And Even Now, "William and Mary", P. 276.
2 " " , P. 285.
3 Frank Harris--Contemporary Portraits, Fourth Series, P. 130.

Beerbohm "sees the famous Putney household not only with the comic sense, but through the eyes of a literary youth introduced for the first time into the presence of immortals".[1] Writing in 1914, Beerbohm reminiscently describes a visit to Swinburne made in the year 1899, when the great poet, old and ailing, lived with Theodore Watts-Dunton, aloof from his contemporaries. "He was and always would be the flammiferous boy of the dim past," writes Beerbohm, "a legendary creature, sole kin to the phoenix."[2] After this tribute comes the sound judgment of the critic: "He was not a thinker; his mind rose ever away from reason to rhapsody; neither was he human. He was a king crowned but not throned. He was a singing bird that could build no nest. He was a youth who could not afford to age."[2] Beerbohm then gives one of the most lyrical definitions of poetry: "Not philosophy, after all, not humanity, just sheer joyous power of song, is the primal thing in poetry. Ideas, and flesh and blood, are but reserves to be brought up when the poet's youth is going."[3]

There follows a minute description of Swinburne's appearance, which has all the sharp clearness of Max the caricaturist. The poet in his old age had "something of a

1 Robert Lynd--Books and Authors, P. 164.
2 And Even Now, "No. 2, The Pines", P. 58.
3 " " , P. 59.

beautifully well-bred child"[1] about him, "the eyes of a god, and the smile of an elf".[2] The fluttering of his hands, a nervous ailment, Beerbohm describes as "an excess of electric vitality".[3] Swinburne had a "frail, sweet voice"[4] and a great love of "babbies".[5] He "revelled in the obscure past", and in his splendid, rare collection of books. The ever-watchful Watts-Dunton hovers solicitously near.

In utterly different vein, with a peculiar, haunting charm, is the essay called "Books within Books". In rare, delicate prose, replete with erudition and personal predilections, Beerbohm speculates on the qualities of books written by characters in books. Here we have many familiar titles--from the "Walter Lorraine" of Arthur Pendennis, to Gideon Forsyth's "Who put back the Clock", which last, unlike other "books within books", was a failure. Beerbohm roams through them all fancifully, lending vividness to our own conception.

"The Golden Drugget" is typical of the essayist's latest phase of development, and reveals a saddened, mellower Beerbohm. This essay, written during war-time, in 1918, expresses the sadness of the wanderer who is at last home

1 And Even Now, "No. 2, The Pines", P. 64.
2 " " , P. 65.
3 " " , P. 66.
4 " " , P. 68.
5 " " , P. 72.

after a long absence. Very touching is his "loving awe"[1] for the little inn whose yellow stream of light stretches across the road like a drugget, ready to welcome the weary traveller. As he approaches the inn, "he explores some of the motives of modern art",[1] and finds that "Brown's Ode to the Steam Plough, Jones' Sonnet Sequence on the Automatic Reaping Machine..... leave unstirred the deeper depths of emotion in us".[2] Their subjects "do not impress us when we regard them sub specie aeternitatis".[2] It is the "primitive and essential things"[3] which "have great power to touch the heart of the beholder"--themes such as a man ploughing, a fisherman mending his nets, "a light from a lonely hut on a dark night."[3] Such are the poet's and the painter's best themes, since "nature is interesting only because of us. And the best symbols of us are such sights.....unalterable by fashion of time or place, sights that in all countries always were and never will not be".[3] These are eternal verities, indeed, which we experience great pleasure in following, as Beerbohm explores them. He sheds no new light upon them, yet he brings us to a greater realization of universal truths which need occasional repetition.

1 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 72.
2 Max Beerbohm--And Even Now, "The Golden Drugget", P. 119.
3 " " " , P. 117.

"The Golden Drugget" reveals for the first time that Beerbohm is growing old and is conscious of belonging definitely to another age. "Is our modern way of life so great a success that mankind will surely never be willing to let it lapse?"[1] he asks plaintively. "We smile already at the people of the early nineteenth century who thought that the vistas opened by applied science were very heavenly. We have travelled far along those vistas. Light is not abundant in them, is it?"[2]

"Kolniyatsch" has been mentioned before as a brilliant hoax. In praise of an imaginary Russian writer, "last of a long line of rag-pickers",[3] Beerbohm writes: "First and last", he was an artist, who "by reason of his technical mastery..... most of all outstands. Whether in prose or in verse, he compasses a broken rhythm that is as the very rhythm of life itself, and a cadence that catches you by the throat, as a terrier catches a rat, and wrings from you the last drop of pity and awe. His skill in avoiding 'the inevitable word' is simply miraculous."[4] This is excellent parody on the enthusiastic reviewer, and recaptures the glitter of Beerbohm's earlier wit. The style is so realistic, (even Russian words are interspersed), the matter seems so authentic, that when the essay first appeared many people were completely "taken in".

1 Max Beerbohm--And Even Now, "The Golden Drugget", P. 118, 119.
2 " " " , P. 119.
3 " " , "Kolniyatsch", P. 50.
4 " " , " , P. 53.

"A Variety of Things", published in 1928, is just what its name implies. It is a collection of writings, some of which had been published in periodicals and some appearing in the book for the first time. It boasts of "a fantastic moral tale, essays.....two fairy stories, a play, a parody, a memoir of a friend, a memoir of two imaginary friends, and also a tribute to a third imaginary friend".[1] At present we are concerned with the essays and the memoirs, which are really essays.

"A Stranger in Venice" is an essay re-telling some of the old legends about that city and giving some of Beerbohm's own intensely keen impressions. Of the four bronze horses over the central porch of St. Mark's, he writes amusingly. Fashioned in a Grecian workshop, they had been captured by the Venetians, then taken to Versailles, then to Venice again. Now, he says, "they have caught the eye of this and that American magnate...They are restive...for the cornice of the Capitol at Washington".[2] There is magic in Venice for Beerbohm. When he leaves it for Padua, he is so disconsolate that he must hurry back where he can live "with the fairies".[3]

"The Spirit of Caricature" is a thorough critique. "Why", asks Beerbohm, "is caricature so rare and so unpopular

1 Max Beerbohm--A Variety of Things, "Note", P. vii.
2 " " , "A Stranger in Venice, P.93
3 " " P.94
(New York, 1928: Alfred A. Knopf)

in England?"[1] He then tells of a dream in which England seemed suddenly to have demanded caricature. A college of caricature for students was desired, but no professor was to be found. Finally, Beerbohm is "approached"[2], and argues his unfitness to teach, being an artist. Ironically, he explains: "The only people who can show how to do things are the people who cannot do them.....The aim of our art-schools is not to produce artists. Art-training is simply a means of keeping young persons out of mischief. As such, it is necessary to the commonweal."[3] In his dream, Beerbohm accepts the post, but at his opening address he is at a loss for words. Whereupon he wakes up, and hating to lose his first speech of this kind, he gives it to us.

The imaginary portrait, "T. Fenning Dodworth", is a delightful parody on the typical witty English politician who never gets elected. By offering some of the choice samples of his wit (?), Beerbohm exposes his stupidity. (Out of their own mouths shall ye judge them" is his method.) There is a final stab at the diaries which are the monuments of great men--"piecemeal, indeed, but great, but glittering."[4]

1 A Variety of Things, "The Spirit of Caricature", P. 119.
2 " " , P. 121.
3 " " , P. 122.
4 " , "T. Fenning Dodworth", P. 151.

The memoir of Aubrey Beardsley, who was a close friend and contemporary of Beerbohm's youth, is warmly eloquent and appreciative of that brilliant artist, whose early death cut off a spectacular career. Beardsley had amazing vitality, despite his malignant illness, and lived each moment of his short life with feverish intensity, accomplishing more in a few years than many eminent men accomplish in a long life span. Beerbohm remarks that "he enjoyed life, but was never wholly of it".[1] He had the aloofness of all great artists, whose power sets them apart. "It is because they stand at a little distance that they can see so much,"[1] writes Beerbohm, with astonishing perspicacity. "All the greatest fantastic art postulates the power to see things, unerringly, as they are;"[1] and, we infer, to conceive them as they are not.

The "memoir of two imaginary friends" is entitled "Not that I Would Boast", and is a satire on the methods by which an author attains popularity. Felix Argallo is an obscure writer, half-Spanish, half-English, who has a "genius for pity".[2] Beerbohm accidentally picks up a book

1 A Variety of Things,
2 " , "Not that I Would Boast", P. 230.

by him at a book-stall and at once becomes interested. He reads "The Wall of Aloes"[1] and "A Bare Bodkin"[1] and grows so enthusiastic that he spreads Argallo's fame until the press hails him as the greatest of all writers ever known.

We all recognize Walter Ledgett, the genial, touchy fellow, whom everyone loves and teases, a popular writer of plays, such as "Sweet Lady Caprice"[2], "A Berserker in the Bastille"[2], and so forth. He also writes literary walking-tours--"Wordsworth's Windermere"[2], "In Stevenson's Cevennes"[2], "A Tramp through Hardy-Land"[2], "Where Shelley Roamed"[2].

It is all very tricksy. Names of real persons are introduced--a favorite stunt in Beerbohm's short stories and parodies--showing their contempt for Walter Ledgett. The letters of George Meredith are mentioned, one of which, purported to be written in 1889, to Leslie Stephen, tells about "an eager homunculus named L_____", who "struck fast across this threshold, sputtering encomiastic cackle"[3].

Anxious to protect poor Ledgett from public scorn, Beerbohm appeals to Argallo's strongest emotion, pity, and

1 A Variety of Things, "Not that I Would Boast", P. 231.
2 " " , P. 236.
3 " " , P. 239.

gets him to write letters (dictated by Beerbohm and addressed to him) in praise of Ledgett. Argallo deplores that Ledgett may have long to wait, for great men's letters are usually published only after their death. The following day, however, the press announces Argallo's suicide. Evidently pity has compelled him to make the sacrifice. His letters are at once published by the ever-ready biographer. Ledgett is soon famous, but cannot understand this strange praise from Argallo, whom he swears he has never met. But Beerbohm, undaunted, assures Ledgett that he is suffering from a temporary loss of memory--"monoutinosamnesia"[1]--a disease which he invents for the occasion.

The sweetness of Ledgett's temper diminishes as his honors increase. Then comes the war, obscuring him, along with other literary men. A few years later, Beerbohm sees him, but it is for the last time. He has become old and fat. "Too intense contemplation of his own genius had begun to undermine his health."[2]

Meanwhile, Beerbohm has collected two of all first

1 A Variety of Things, "Not that I Would Boast", P. 258.
2 " " , P. 266.

editions of Ledgett's works and when Ledgett dies he sells them to "Mr. Nat Heinz, the famous 'Firsts Agent'"[1] from New York. The letters by Argallo are also sold, but as the latter's name is almost unknown by this time, they are not of much value.

It is a compendious satire--on the writer of popular renown, on the methods of the press, on the alert biographer, on the ignorant, impressionable public, on the irony and evanescence of fame, and on much more that one can read into it. So strong is the spotlight on all these weaknesses that one's mirth is frequently mixed with less pleasant feelings for the hypocrisies so baldly exposed.

1 A Variety of Things, "Not that I Would Boast", P. 266.

CHAPTER 111

THE PARODY

The parody as an art-form presents a twofold difficulty: not only must the style of the victim be carefully studied and imitated, but it must be aped in such a way that the result is unmistakeably like the original, and yet a caricature of the original. The parody is, then, the caricature of literature--a likeness that is exaggerated for the purpose of comedy--and it goes further than the caricature; it reaches beyond the superficial distortion to ideas and sentiments. Small wonder, then, that there are fewer parodists than caricaturists.

As a parodist, Beerbohm is as skilful as "Max" the caricaturist. His "desire to see things as they are, and to be witty through wisdom"[1] explains his genius in both mediums of exaggeration. No one since Thackeray has equalled him as a parodist. His criticism, which is usually aimed at his contemporaries, is always well-bred. No matter what the subject he attacks--oddities of style, dearth of ideas, ornateness of language, or mere personal peculiarities--he is the same bland critic as essayist. He has no personal malice, nor is he interested in social or political or humanitarian reforms. His

1 Frank Harris--Contemporary Portraits, Fourth Series, P. 129.

venom is directed against the type, with a caustic wit which clarifies and reveals without wounding.

In the field of the parody, the short story entitled "The Guerdon"[1] and the collection known as "A Christmas Garland"[2] represent practically all Beerbohm's work. Many of his essays, however, contain passages of parody, and some of his uncollected writings are pure parody. These latter have appeared in various publications, but their author has not selected them for permanent publication in book form.

Just as in his caricatures Beerbohm follows the adage, "On se moque de ce qu'on aime"[3], so in his parodies he victimizes his favorite writers. "The Guerdon" was written when Beerbohm heard that the Order of Merit was to be confirmed on Henry James. The writer had given copies to two of his friends. Later the story was published without his knowledge. It is a parody on the style of Henry James; a more skilful arrangement of perfectly meaningless sentences it is impossible to conceive. Instead of employing words to explain his meaning (as Henry James was at such pains to do), Beerbohm uses them dexterously to conceal any meaning they may chance to convey. The result is a delightfully absurd exaggeration of the difficult, involved phraseology of Henry James.

1 In the collection called "A Variety of Things", published in 1928.
2 Published in 1912.
3 Max Beerbohm--Rossetti and His Circle, Note, P. vi. (London, 1922: William Heinemann)

"A Christmas Garland" "woven by" Beerbohm appeared in 1912. It is a miscellany of some contributions made to the Christmas Supplement of the "Saturday Review" in 1896. William Rothenstein tells of the inception of this book. Asked by Frank Harris, editor of the "Saturday Review", to edit the Christmas Supplement, Rothenstein asked his friend, Max, to make one or two caricatures. However, these were rejected, and Max offered to write something instead--"some kind of skit--possibly parodies of various writers writing on the subject of Christmas--'Seasonable Tributes' levied by Max Beerbohm? or something of the sort...Mrs. Meynell on 'Holly'--Arthur Symons on 'Christmas Eve in Picadilly'--Henry James never mentioning Christmas by name and so forth. Rather amusing if acceptable."[1]

They were both "rather amusing" and "acceptable", for they appeared in that year's Supplement. Some of these first skits are included in the "Christmas Garland", in which are seventeen parodies, but some were not deemed worthy to be reprinted by their author.

"A Christmas Garland" belongs among the masterpieces of

1 William Rothenstein--Men and Memories. Letter from Beerbohm to Rothenstein, P. 289, 290.

persiflage. It "contains the finest prose parodies in the language".[1] Beerbohm parodies seventeen writers, all contemporaries, and apologizes to only two of them for so doing--George Meredith and Frank Harris. The latter emphasizes this point, being one of the two, although the fact does not appear to have any special significance. George Meredith pronounced all the parodies good except his, "which", says Harris, "is just what all of us felt".[2]

"The Mote in the Middle Distance", the first story, is another parody of Henry James, even more amusing than "The Guerdon". Two small children are in bed on Christmas morning, discussing the "mote", which prevents them from seeing their Christmas stockings. They speak in a wonderfully abstruse, unintelligible language. The opening sentence is so good that it must be quoted in its entirety: "It was with the sense of a, for him, very memorable something that he peered now into the immediate future, and tried, not without compunction, to take that period up where he had, prospectively, left it." We are at once launched forth into meaninglessness and bewilderment. Anyone who has ploughed through the mazes of James' complicated prose will relish the deliberate laboriousness and cunning of that weighty phrase. Henry James,

1 Robert Lynd--Books and Authors, P. 154.
2 Frank Harris--Contemporary Portraits, Fourth Series, P. 130.

seen through the reflection of Beerbohm's wit, is an amusingly antiquated absurdity.

Kipling and his inveterate nationalism are next attacked, in a story, "P. C., X., 36", in which a philosophical cockney policeman figures prominently, arresting Santa Claus, who is accused of being German!

In "Perkins and Mankind", H. G. Wells breaks away from a week-end Christmas party to devote himself to reforming mankind and fitting them into a new calendar with a twenty-four day, in accordance with an ingenious scheme for accelerating the motion of this planet, and various other fantastic chimeras.

"Some Damnable Errors about Christmas" provides us with G. K. Chesterton's proofs that Christmas Day comes every day of the year. So does April Fool's Day, infers Chesterton-à-la Beerbohm, for we are all fools all the time.

Frank Harris, writing on Shakespeare and Christmas, proves by "the logic of the heart"[1] that Shakespeare did not mention Christmas (except once or twice, in a very casual fashion), because Anne Hathaway was born on that day.

1 Max Beerbohm--"A Christmas Garland", "Shakespeare and Christmas", P. 80.

"Scruts" gives us Arnold Bennett of the "Five Towns" fame. Emily Wrackgarth of the Five Towns wins a husband by filling the Christmas pudding with "scruts", (bits of imperfect pottery), which her lover heroically crunches and swallows, to her unbounded astonishment and admiration.

In "Endeavor", Galsworthy's old lady and gentleman (Jacynth and Adrian) allow a robin to starve and die on their window-sill, on Christmas morning, because they have "no right to meddle in what ought to be done by the collective action of the state", and anyway, "these sporadic doles can do no real good" and even "degrade the birds who receive them".[1]

George Bernard Shaw gives "A Straight Talk" in his Preface to "Saint George, A Christmas Play". He glories in the fact that he stole the play, plot and all, but stiffened it with "civistic conscience"[2], thus transforming it into a masterpiece. For the benefit of his readers, "who have no energy left over to cope with other authors"[2], he tells the story.

After years of "false gods"[3] such as Zola and Yeats, George Moore discovers that there is only "one doorstep worth scrubbing"[4]--that of Charles Dickens. He has read only one

1 Max Beerbohm--A Christmas Garland, "Endeavor", P. 111.
2 " " , "A Straight Talk", P.158.
3 " " , "Dickens", P. 181.
4 " " , " , P. 182.

chapter in "Pickwick Papers"--"Mr. Wardle's Christmas Party"--but this is sufficient to decide him. From this chapter he disengages "the erotic motive"[1], which, he says, is all there is to literature, though there may be in real life, "moments when one does not think of girls, are there not, dear reader?"[2]

G. K. Street wanders pointlessly and interminably in "Christmas", discussing everything but Christmas. It is a riotous mélange, without any unity whatsoever.

Joseph Conrad, in "The Feast", places Mr. Williams on an island surrounded by cannibals, who capture him. The "last of his illusions"[3] is that he will be "a grave loss to his employers"[3].

Edmund Gosse indulges in "A Recollection" of Christmas in Venice, where he brought together two great men--Ibsen and Browning--who had never heard of each other. The meeting is not a great success.

"Of Christmas" by Hilaire Belloc, sets out to explain the meaning of Christmas, but the writer becomes sidetracked, and the result is a gallimaufrey of unrelated thoughts.

"A Romaunt of Days Edvardian" is "Fond Hearts Askew", in the best romantic manner of Maurice Hewlett. Lady Angelica Plantagenet and Geoffry Dizzard are affianced, but at the Drury Lane Theatre they fall in love with the actors--she with

1 Max Beerbohm--A Christmas Garland, "Dickens", P. 183.
2 " " " , P. 180.
3 Max Beerbohm--A Christmas Garland, "The Feast", P. 130.

a woman masquerading as a man, he with a man masquerading as a woman. They wait at the stage-door for the actors, after changing clothes. When the actors appear in their proper clothes, the affianced pair think it a jest. A fight ensues, and "some say Geoffry bled to death"[1] and Angelica fled to a nunnery; others say Geoffry and Angelica wed. At any rate, it is all very much askew from beginning to end.

"A Sequellula to 'The Dynasts'" is Thomas Hardy at his most sinister. Written in the form of a play, in free verse, the scene is laid in the void. The Ancient Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirit Ironic, the Spirit Sinister, and others of like gloom and sombreness comprise the dramatis personae. Hardy, in a foot-note, is made to exonerate himself from all guilt: "This has been composed from a scenario thrust on me by some one else. My philosophy of life saves me from sense of responsibility for any of my writings; but I venture to hold myself specially irresponsible for this one!"[2]

The spirits read "The Dynasts" and disagree with the author,

1 Max Beerbohm--A Christmas Garland, "Fond Hearts Askew", P. 174.
2 " " , "A Sequellula to 'The Dynasts'", P. 61.

but visit the earth to investigate. They arrive on Christmas Day, when, they have heard, men are supposed to be united "in brotherly affection and good will".[1] Choosing a spot to alight, and finding themselves in a gaol, they are convinced of Hardy's soundness; that "automata these animalculae are--puppets, pitiable jackaclocks"; that

> ..."Upon this planet
> There's no free will, only obedience
> To some blind, deaf, unthinking despotry
> That justifies the horridest pessimism."[2]

In "Euphemia Clashthought" Beerbohm "takes off" Meredith with miraculous skill. It is Christmas morning in Clashthought Park. Euphemia ("'nymph in the Heavy Dragoons' was Mrs. Cryptic-Sparkler's famous definition of her)...had breadth. Heels that spread ample curves over the ground she stood on, and hands that might floor you with a clench of them, were hers...Her nose was virginal, with hints of the Iron Duke at most angles... One saw that she was a woman. She inspired deference".[3]

The fiance, Sir Rebus, carries a note-book, in the approved Meredithian manner. He converses with Euphemia in burlesque Meredithian epigrams. Then Euphemia, after the

1 Max Beerbohm--A Christmas Garland, "A Sequellula to 'The Dynasts'", P. 68.
2 " A Christmas Garland, "A Sequellula to 'The Dynasts'", P. 73.
3 " A Christmas Garland, "Euphemia Clashthought", P. 191, 192.

fashion of all Meredith heroines, "swam to the bell-rope and grasped it for a tinkle. The action spread curves to her lover's eyes. He was a man."[1]

Ready to leave for church, they have some port to drink, and become somewhat intoxicated. Sir Rebus writes in his note-book: "The senses are inter-necine. They shall have learned esprit de corps before they enslave us."[2] And:"Visual distraction cries havoc to ultimate delicacy of palate."[2]

Euphemia, too, is equipped with "stilus", and on the "tablets pendant at her girdle"[3] she writes, while her lover snores: "How long has our sex had humour? Jael hammered."[3]

The last sentence of the parody is a piece of consummate skill: "Pagan young womanhood, six feet of it, spanned eight miles before luncheon."[3]

Bohun Lynch has written one of the best appreciations of these parodies. Pointing out that in reading them we become so interested in the story, or the essay, that we forget we are reading a parody, and "are disappointed because some point is too laboriously set forth, some trick of rhythm over-strained. All art calls for self-sacrifice", he continues, "for the

1 Max Beerbohm--A Christmas Garland, "Euphemia Clashthought", P. 193.
2 " " " , P. 196.

stifling of happy but inappropriate impulses, for rigid selection, for ruthless rejection. But to art which deliberately spoils a good story in order to make it a better parody I make my profoundest bow."[1]

In a characteristic "Note" to the "Christmas Garland", Beerbohm states that he considers his style "more or less formed" in this little book. The parodies seem to be written in a casual style, as if Beerbohm's pose were that of "a Titan relaxing over a cup of tea. Like George Bernard Shaw, he is able, while taking himself conscientiously, seriously, to assume a play-hour manner. He seems indifferent, but inwardly he is tense and almost pushing."[2]

The best tributes to the parodies come from two of Beerbohm's victims--Edmund Gosse and Henry James. A letter from the former tells Beerbohm that Henry James discussed the "Christmas Garland" "with the most extraordinary vivacity and appreciation" and called the book "the most intelligent that has ever been produced in England for many a long day."[3] Further, writes Gosse: "But he (Henry James) says you have destroyed the trade of writing. No one, now, can write without incurring the reproach of somewhat ineffectively imitating--you!

1 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 59.
2 C. Lewis Hind--Authors and I, P. 42.
3 Evan Charteris--Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse, P. 350, 351.

What could be more handsome? And alas! my dear Max, what can be more true? I, for instance, shall never be able to draw another portrait without calling down upon me the sneer, 'Not half so amusing as your dinner with Ibsen and Browning!' You are our Conqueror."[1]

What Henry James actually said was: "It is so good that now, whenever I write, I have the uneasy feeling of parodying myself."[2]

1 Evan Charteris--Life and Letters of Sir Edmund Gosse, P. 350, 351.

2 Current Opinion, March, 1921.

CHAPTER 1V

THE SHORT STORY

The various forms of Beerbohm's work can scarcely be held to any rigid classification; they are constantly merging and overlapping. His essays are sometimes stories, or satires; his parodies are stories, or essays; his stories are parodies, or allegories, or satires. Any departure from the essay is really an extension of it; his stories are "a wreath of essays, aphorisms, detached reflections, hung about a refreshingly extravagant story".[1]

"The Happy Hypocrite, A Tale for Tired Men", appeared first in "The Yellow Book Magazine" in October, 1896. It is what is technically known as a "long short story", an allegory in essence, ostensibly a story for children. An amusing mock-sententiousness and a naive, delicate irony pervade the tale. There are the usual Maxish tricks of foot-notes, referring to pseudo-historical authorities, and a sudden swerving from archaic to modern phraseology which gives an absurd twist to the story. "The daintiness of Mr. Beerbohm's invention is best seen in 'The Happy Hypocrite'."[2]

1 Holbrook Jackson--The Eighteen-Nineties, P. 149. (New York, 1914: M. Kennerley.)
2 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 34.

The plot is skilfully worked out and extremely simple. The hero, Lord George Hell, is a very naughty man, "the mention of whose very name caused riotous children to 'behave'".[1] He falls in love with a little dancer, Jenny Mere, who rejects him. The man who will be her lover must have the face of a saint, she declares.

Undaunted by this repulse, Lord George proceeds to Mr. Aeneas, the famous mask-maker.[2] "I want the mask of a saint", he demands.

"'Mask of a saint, my Lord? Certainly!' said Mr. Aeneas briskly. 'With or without halo?.....'"[2]

Mr. Aeneas makes him a beautiful mask, and he at once wins Jenny's love. Of course she does not know who he is.

Lord George changes his surname from Hell to Heaven, and he and Jenny are promptly married. They live simply and happily in the country. Lord George has mended his evil ways, and lives only to please Jenny, who knows nothing about his former life. She adores and worships him as a saint.

Their happiness is soon interrupted by the dancer, La Gambogi, Lord George's former wicked sweetheart, who is jealous of this new love and has come to betray him. From her window across the street, she had seen him buy his mask from Mr. Aeneas. Before the very eyes of his wife, she rips off the

1 Max Beerbohm--The Happy Hypocrite, P. 22.
2 " " , P. 53.
(Girard, Kansas, no date: Haldeman-Julius Co., Little Blue Book No. 595.)

waxen mask. But what is her amazement when she sees a face exactly like the mask which covered it! "Line for line, feature for feature, it was the same. 'Twas a saint's face."[1]

Beerbohm's premise at the beginning of the story--"I hold that Candour is good only when it reveals good actions or good sentiments, and that when it reveals evil, itself is evil, even also"[2]--is justified by the conclusion. George Heaven, whose new face and new life have transformed him, pardons the traitress, and does not dare ask the forgiveness of his bride, whose love he stole "by means of that waxen semblance". He can only ask her to forget him. "Ah, Jenny, Jenny, do not look at me," he sadly exclaims. "Turn your eyes from the foul reality that I dissembled."[3]

But Jenny is nonplussed, for her husband's face, unknown to himself, is exactly like the mask. She questions him, and in her violet eyes he sees the reflection of his own face.[3] "Filled with joy and wonder", he hears her tell him that his face is "fairer than the semblance that hid it and deceived" her. "'Twas well that you veiled from me the full glory of your face", she tells him, "for indeed, I was not worthy to behold it too soon. But I am your wife now. Let me look always at your own face. Let the time of my p r o b a t i o n be

1 Max Beerbohm--The Happy Hypocrite, P. 58.
2 " " , P. 4.
3 " " , P. 59.

over....."[1] And the happy hypocrite wisely embraces her like a little child, and is "happier than he had ever been".[1] La Gambogi slinks away, thwarted, while the mask melts in the sun.

The lightness of Beerbohm's touch, with its innumerable amusing tricks, diverts without weakening the allegorical significance. The story might almost be called a variation of the favorite Beerbohm theme--a defense of artifice--for it is intrinsically a plea for hypocrisy where honesty would have been disastrous.

At the suggestion of Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the well-known actress, "The Happy Hypocrite" was dramatized and produced in 1900. It was "charmingly staged" and "the first night was a triumph".[2]

"Seven Men", published in 1919, contains four stories which are parodies and one story which is actually burlesque. The title, "Seven Men", is at first somewhat puzzling. There are five stories, the titles of which are names of men. One story is called "Hilary Maltby and Stephen Braxton". This accounts for six men. Who is the seventh? After reading one or two stories, one discovers the seventh man--Beerbohm himself, the most fascinating of all, who writes in the first person.

Bohun Lynch relates that he has a friend who is keeping

1 Max Beerbohm--The Happy Hypocrite, P. 60.
2 Will Rothenstein--Men and Memories, P. 370.

a record of the number of people who ask for the identity of the seventh man, and C. Lewis Hind writes: "I had written about it ('Seven Men') in a 'Literary Letter' and the next week was obliged to print the following--'A correspondent who has been reading Max Beerbohm's 'Seven Men' complains that he has carefully counted the list and can only find six. Ha, ha! I expected that. The seventh man is, of course, Max Beerbohm himself. He is implicit on every page of this delightful book.'"[1]

Like Henry James, Beerbohm loves to write about men of letters, but while the former makes them his heroes, Beerbohm makes them the butt of his ridicule. Four of the seven men (apart from Beerbohm himself) are writers. All are objects of ridicule. The other two--James Pethel and A. V. Laider--are decidedly unreal characters, for Beerbohm cannot enter convincingly into the personality of the gambler or the liar.

The first story, "Enoch Soames" is "just nothing, just everything",[1] --a satire on the typical minor poet of the eighteen-nineties. Soames had "a thin, vague beard--or rather, he had a chin on which a large number of hairs weakly curled and clustered to cover its retreat.....He wore a soft black hat of clerical kind but of Bohemian intention".....[2]

Beerbohm, who tells us that he has just begun to write and

1 C. Lewis Hind--Authors and I, P. 42.
2 Max Beerbohm--Seven Men, "Enoch Soames", P. 6. (London, 1919, Wm. Heinemann).

is "immensely keen on the mot juste"[1], decides on first meeting Soames (Will Rothenstein brings the two men together) that "'dim'is the mot juste for him"[1]. Again we observe Beerbohm's favorite trick--introducing actual persons for realism.

After the first meeting Beerbohm buys Soames' book, "Negations", on which he comments: "Head or tail was just what I hadn't made of that slim green volume."[2] Another Soames book--"Fungoids" is essayed, and we are given a sample of its contents; a poem entitled "To a Young Woman", as follows:

"Thou art, who has not been!
Pale tunes irresolute
And traceries of old sounds
Blown from a rotted flute
Mingle with noise cymbals rouged with rust,
.....
.....
.....
For this it is
That in thy counterpart
Of age-long mockeries
Thou hast not been nor art!"[3]

On this priceless sample Beerbohm remarks: "There seemed to me

1 Max Beerbohm--Seven Men, "Enoch Soames", P. 6.
2 " " " , P. 11.
3 " " " , P. 16.

a certain inconsistency as between the first and last lines of this."[1] And we recognize a striking consistency between it and countless others of the same genre.

G. B. S. comes in for an amusing thrust. Beerbohm, questioning Soames on the appearance of the future generation, is told, "They all looked very like one another."[2] He muses: "My mind took a fearsome leap. 'All dressed in Jaeger?'"[2]

"Enoch Soames" is generally conceded to be the masterpiece of the book, "Seven Men". Here Beerbohm is fooling, "but he fools wisely. He never takes his eye off human nature. He draws not a caricature, but a man. The minor poet--the utterly incompetent minor poet--has never been drawn so brilliantly and with so much intelligence as in 'Enoch Soames'. 'Enoch Soames' is a perfect fable for egotists. It might be described as a sympathetic exposure.....an imaginary portrait which is as impressively serious as it is brilliantly entertaining."[3]

"Hilary Maltby and Stephen Braxton" are "two rival novelists, who run neck to neck in social as in literary triumphs until Maltby goes definitely ahead by being asked to spend a week-end at the Duchess of Hertfordshire's house, Keeb."[4]

1 Max Beerbohm--Seven Men, "Enoch Soames", P. 16.
2 " --"-- " , P. 36.
3 Robert Lynd--Books and Authors, P. 160.
4 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 77.

This story is something quite new in literature--a "comic ghost story".[1] For Maltby, who has forestalled an invitation to his rival, Braxton, is haunted by the latter's ghost. His week-end is a series of harrowing faux pas, which are farcical to the reader, but deadly tragic to poor Maltby.

Beerbohm quotes the "foolish exaggerations" of the critics on a contemporary author, of whom they say: "For pungency of satire there has been nothing like it since Swift laid down his pen, and for sheer sweetness and tenderness of feeling--en forti dulcedo--nothing to be mentioned in the same breath with Theocritus."[2]

Again Beerbohm plays his pet stunt--real characters appear in the story. This time Mr. Balfour is introduced, as one of a crowd who view poor Maltby's bicycle accident. An amusing touch shows us poor Maltby groaning, and ostensibly pointing to Balfour (though it is really Braxton's ghost whom he sees behind Balfour), saying: "It was all HIS fault."[3]

The culmination of the satire is reached at the close of the story. The ambitious Maltby, undeterred by his former unfortunate experience, is in retirement at Lucca with an old Italian "Contessa", whom he had married some time ago, and of whom he says proudly: "She is a lineal descendant of the Emperor Hadrian."[4]

1 Robert Lynd--Books and Authors, P. 159.
2 Max Beerbohm--Seven Men, "Hilary Maltby and Stephen Braxton", P. 53.
3 " " " , P. 92.
4 " " " , P. 104.

Will Rothenstein, who is also one of the real characters in the story, exclaims in its praise: "How profound is Max's story of Maltby haunted by the ghost, not of someone long dead, but of his own snobbishness!"[1]

The technique employed by Beerbohm in these two stories--"Enoch Soames" and "Hilary Maltby and Stephen Braxton"--gives as realistic an effect as "Robinson Crusoe" or "The Apparition of Mrs. Veal". The use of well-known names, such as Balfour and Rothenstein, the direct, simple style of narrative, the first person, and the careful attention to detail--these create an impression of absolute fact. In each case the reader is carried on by the sheer interest of the story itself, apart from its satirical quality.

"James Pethel" is somewhat of a disappointment after the first two stories; it lacks conviction. The inveterate gambler who is "genially reckless of his own safety, but abominably reckless where others are concerned"[2] strikes the reader as a person who is either insane or impossible. The story aims at realism; the technique is the same as that used in the other two stories. The same theme treated fantastically might have carried more conviction; the idea is essentially far-fetched and does not lend itself easily to direct narrative. Beerbohm has strayed from his familiar field--the literary--to one utterly strange to him, and the result is not felicitous.

1 Will Rothenstein--Men and Memories, P. 335.
2 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 75.

"A. V. Laider" succeeds better than "James Pethel", although it too has a non-literary theme. It is very clever leg-pulling, and as Beerbohm is adept at this sort of thing, we are vastly amused. On and on are we led, from one horror to another, until suddenly an anti-climax mocks our excitement. A. V. Laider may be an incorrigible liar, but his stories make such excellent "copy" that we can forgive him anything.

"Savonarola Brown" is straight burlesque. The story concerns a writer, Brown, who is a friend of Beerbohm. Brown began a tragedy entitled "Savonarola", but died before he could complete it. Beerbohm gives us the play as far as it was written, and attempts to sketch a conclusion himself. The "tragedy" is an excruciating compound of Elizabethan blank verse, medievalism, echoes from Shakespeare, modern phraseology, and other hilarious incongruities of speech and character.

The dramatis personae include Lucrezia Borgia, St. Francis of Assisi, Leonardo da Vinci, Dante, and Machiavelli--"all rolled into one" play. It is like a musical comedy or a revue. After some lines of pseudo-Elizabethan verse (Beerbohm remarking that he could not find one line which could not be scanned perfectly), we find the following modern twist:

> ....."What would my sire have said,
> And what my dam, had anybody told them

The time would come when I should occupy
A felon's cell? O the disgrace of it!
The scandal, the incredible come-down!
It masters me. I see i' my mind's eye
The public prints--'Sharp sentence on a Monk!'"[1]

Beerbohm encounters great problems in trying to finish the play. He feels that logically he must kill off Savonarola, "horrified"[2] though Brown would have been. Accordingly, he brings together the hero, Savonarola, the heroine, Lucrezia, and Machiavelli and Lorenzo, on Mount Fiesole. There too the Pope and his retinue, in pursuit of Savonarola, arrive in due time. But Lucrezia and Savonarola take poison (the "deadly nightshade")[3] and die, just in time to foil the Pope. However, the latter consoles himself with a funeral oration, which he concludes by announcing:

"In deference to this our double sorrow
Sun shall not shine today nor shine to-morrow."[3]

After which the sun obediently drops out of sight, the curtain falling in "a great darkness".[3]

The remaining short stories written by Beerbohm are contained in "A Variety of Things", published in 1928. Two of these short stories are fairy tales, one "a fantastic moral tale".[4] The two fairy stories were written in 1897, when the author was twenty-five years of age.

1 Max Beerbohm--Seven Men, "Savonarola Brown", P. 208, 209.
2 " " " , P. 217.
3 " " " , P. 218.
4 " --A Variety of Things, "Note", P. vii.

The first of these "The Dreadful Dragon of Hay Hill", is a fairy tale which can be enjoyed for the story element alone, but there is more bite to it than is at first apparent.

Hay Hill is situated, according to Beerbohm, near Berkeley Square and Picadilly, in what is now London. Beerbohm relates how, long ago, a dragon invaded the peaceful country and preyed upon the people, who forgot their petty disputes in their common fear.

There is a world of irony in this pretty little tale--penetrating comparisons between our modern civilization and the one about which Beerbohm writes, by which the present age suffers. Describing one of the good members of the community of Hay Hill, Beerbohm writes: "He was a quiet, disinterested, indefinite worker for the common weal, burning always with that hard, gem-like flame which Mr. Pater discerned in the breasts of our own Civil Servants."[1]

"The Story of the Small Boy and the Barley Sugar", the second fairy tale, would delight any child and amuse any grown-up. Tommy Tune, a poor little boy of Rutland Village, is at last given a penny to buy candy at Miss Good's tempting shop. Miss Good (who has been indiscreetly celebrating her own birthday by over-eating her own sweets), is ill, and a lovely fairy waits on Tommy. She sells him a stick of barley sugar, telling him that with each bite of the candy he will get his wish.

1 Max Beerbohm--A Variety of Things, "The Dreadful Dragon of Hay Hill, P. 49.

Tommy hurries to the school-house where his pretty lady-love, Jill, has been kept in. (She could not spell correctly, for she was absent-mindedly thinking of Tommy and the promised candy). On his way to Jill, Tommy stops in a field and wishes for Jill to appear. She is there almost at once, and snatches the candy from his hand, cramming it all into her mouth. Poor Tommy, aghast at her greediness, asks her if she has wished. She replies that she has; she wished that he "hadn't eaten that first bit".[1]

The "fantastic moral tale", entitled "Yai and the Moon", has for its setting the mysterious beauty of Japan. Yai is a wistful, dreamy little maiden, who tells her father that she does not wish to marry the man he has chosen for her. She finds no fault with the young Sanza, but she is in love with the Moon. However, her father will hear none of this nonsense, and insists on the marriage.

The first interview between Yai and Sanza is a most amusing incongruity of fact and fantasy. Sanza, educated in a European university, is fairly bursting with self-importance and miscellaneous facts, which he pours forth like a machine. While Yai tells him of her love for the Moon, he eloquently informs her of its scientific nature.

On the evening before her marriage, Yai escapes through her window. She takes her little boat to the edge of the sea, where she knows the Moon will rise. When the Moon appears, she

1 Max Beerbohm--A Variety of Things, "The Story of the Small Boy and the Barley Sugar", P. 209.

tells him that she loves him and beseeches him to take her, "that she might sail over the sky with him that night."[1] The Moon is reluctant; he warns her that when he sinks into the sea, she will drown. But Yai insists, and finally he yields, gently taking her in his arms.

Next morning when the Sun rises from the sea, he sees the "little pale body floating over the waves"[1] and recognizes the child of the ruler of Haokami. In his vanity he assumes that she was in love with him and swam out to meet him. "How very sad!" he exclaims, covering her with gold and muttering sagely: "After all.....it does not do for these human beings to have ideas above their station. It always leads to unhappiness. The dead child down there would soon have forgotten her unfortunate attachment to me, if she had only stayed ashore and married that impertinent little fellow, who is always spying at me through his confounded telescope. And there he is, to be sure! Quite the bridegroom!"[2]

The beauty and pathos of this little story are harmoniously intermingled with a delicate sense of irony. Sanza's matter-of-factness and Yai's poetic speech form a curious contrast. There are passages of poetic purity and loveliness of language unlike anything else Beerbohm has ever written, as, for example,

1 Max Beerbohm--A Variety of Things, "Yai and the Moon", P. 224.
2 " " , " , P. 226.

the words of Yai to her father, when she speaks of the robe given her by her betrothed, according to custom:

"It lies in my room, and over all its tissue are moons and lilac. But lilac is said to be the flower of unfaith, and moons are but images of him whom I love. Ever since I was little, I have loved the Moon.....From my window, father, I watch him as he rises in silver from the edge of the sea. I watch him as he climbs up the hollow sky. For love of him I forego sleep, and when he sinks into the sea he leaves me desolate. Of no man but him can I be the bride."[1]

Except for the inevitable touch of subtle irony, this little tale is a thing apart from all Beerbohm's other work--a beautiful prose fantasy. The writer has captured the very mood of fantasy and the atmosphere of the East. The restraint and simplicity of his style evoke the Japanese scene with magical delicacy.

1 Max Beerbohm--A Variety of Things, "Yai and the Moon", P. 217.

CHAPTER V

THE PLAY

The single play which Beerbohm wrote, "A Social Success", is included in "A Variety of Things", the collection which was published in 1928. The play was written before 1928, however, (although the exact date is not given), for Beerbohm's "Note" tells us that the acting rights were secured by George Alexander, who produced it at the Palace Theatre in January, 1913. It was again performed, as a curtain-raiser, at the St. James's, a year later.

"A Social Success" is a one-act play in which Beerbohm satirizes the too popular young man of society, who is distracted by the demands of his numerous friends, and anxious to obtain peace at any price. Tommy Dixon, a very personable young man, "aged thirty, clean-shaven, debonnair"[1], is the "social success". He cheats at cards, in order to incur the stigma of his friends. Just when he is rejoicing at the success of his little scheme, one by one his friends return, all too ready to forgive him for such a slight failing. ("As if there weren't heaps of things worse than cheating at cards!"[2] says Lady Amersham, who is "pretty" and romantic-looking"[3].)

Tommy is forced to become reconciled to his popularity, and edifies his friend, Robbins, (who has always yearned for the success which irks Tommy) with the following bit of

1 Max Beerbohm--A Variety of Things, "A Social Success", P.168.
2 " " , " , P.184.
3 " " , " , P.168.

philosophy:

"The married women, they don't want you to make love to them. But they want you to want to make love to them, all the time. And if they think you're making love to anyone else--or if they think anyone else is wanting you to want to--then there's a deuce of a row".[1].....

Bohun Lynch offers an apt comment on the above passage: "In that last quotation, one seems to catch an echo. In fact that--that--that almost might not have been written by Max Beerbohm at all."[2]

The plot is very thin and the play, on the whole, rather strained, but there is some very witty dialogue and amusing raillery. It does not quite "come off" in the reading. Perhaps when seen on the stage it carries more conviction.

1 Max Beerbohm--A Variety of Things, "A Social Success", P. 182.
2 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 66.

CHAPTER VI

THE NOVEL

"Zuleika Dobson", Beerbohm's one long novel, was published in 1911. According to one authority, "it was planned and partly written in the late 'nineties, though no doubt the new part was not added without a most scrupulous revision of the old".[1] The continuation of a story written twelve or thirteen years before is "remarkable evidence of the persistency with which Max Beerbohm had remained his old self", adds the same critic, regretting, however, that it is only Beerbohm's "old self's shadow" that lurks in the pages of "Zuleika Dobson". With this regret few can sympathize, for the novel is irresistible.

Although in form "Zuleika Dobson" is a novel, it can hardly be classified strictly as such. Like all Beerbohm's work, it is a compound of various forms--a fantasy, a satire, even a travesty at times. It abounds in "the poetry of laughter",[2] in those subtle truths and half-truths for which Beerbohm is famed; its irony and "exquisite raillery"[3] are incomparable. There is not another novel like it. The story is a satire on romantic love, on noblesse oblige, on Oxford with its undergraduate movements. "Criticisms of human nature fly through the book, not like arrows but upon the wings of sylphs."[4]

1 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 67.
2 William Rothenstein--Men and Memories, P. 369.
3 Dixon Scott--Men of Letters, P. 181.
4 E. M. Forster--Aspects of the Novel, P. 173.
(New York, 1927: Harcourt, Brace and Co.)

The theme--suicide--invites comparison with another famous work on the same subject, De Quincey's "Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts". Style and intent are vastly different, however. De Quincey's essay is consistently humorous and ironic, while Beerbohm's story is always satiric, mocking, or farcical.

"Zuleika Dobson" also reminds one of a short story by George Meredith--"Farina", a satire on romance and chivalry. Meredith attacks the usual trapperies of romantic writers, medieval settings and all the flummeries generally used to create an appropriate setting. His heroine, Margherita, is known as "The White Rose of Germany". Her countless admirers enlist under her banner, call themselves "The White Rose Society", and challenge anyone who dares contest Margherita's right to the title of pærless beauty. These youth take an unholy delight in fighting in defence of her beauty and in marring themselves for her sake. Hardly one young man of the village remains unscarred. To die for Margherita is their idea of ecstasy, and they constantly court death in her name. In utter contrast with these extravagant adventurers, the hero, Farina, is simple, sensible, and by far the bravest of all. His quiet courage is most effective in the end, however, for he it is who wins the matchless Margherita. Meredith's story is much more subtle than Beerbohm's, and thus has not the same widespread appeal as the gay satire of "Zuleika Dobson".

In this narrative, as in his shorter stories, Beerbohm is extremely accurate as to detail. Again he uses his trick of inserting foot-notes to give the desired effect of authenticity. There are frequent "frank conceits"[1] and often the phrases are "preened dandaically"[2]. The novel is an elaborate structure of lovely artifice, "as formal as Mozart and as irresponsible as a fairy-tale"[3]. It is frankly fantastic, a lark; "it bears the same relation to realism that music does to noise or dancing to pedestrian exercise."[3]

The introduction to the Dodd, Mead and Company edition of "Zuleika Dobson", written by Francis Hackett, describes how Beerbohm "'addicts' in 1911 were excited by the promise of a full-length novel. So much of Beerbohm's criticism was admiration of sober realism; they hoped for a realistic novel or a tenuous analysis in the mode of Henry James. What they got was first and foremost...the emanation of a most subtle and deadly caricaturist, the work of a shrewd and knavish sprite among mortal men."[4]

"Zuleika Dobson" is clearly the work of a caricaturist. Each character is exaggerated with just the right shading--enough to accentuate the ridiculous, while maintaining a nice sense of proportion throughout. One accepts the fantasy as such and enjoys its absurdities.

1 Dixon Scott--Men of Letters, P. 180
2 " " " P. 181.
3 " " "
4 Francis Hackett--Introduction to "Zuleika Dobson", P. 2. (New York, 1922: Dodd, Mead and Co.)

There is, according to Hackett, only one thing lacking in "Zuleika Dobson", and that is "dullness; it is a long story taken at the pace of a sprint, its wit relentlessly sustained."[1] The story is ingenious and varied in plot and incident; it has a "consummate literary flavor";[2] a wealth of erudition is packed into it. Many people have seen a specific classical theme caricatured in the novel--Homer's tale of Helen of Troy. "The face that launched a thousand ships" and sent so many men to their doom finds a worthy modern counterpart in Zuleika, the irresistible conjurer, for whom the whole undergraduate body at Oxford commit suicide.

Briefly, the story is this: Zuleika, once a governess and now a celebrated conjurer, visits her grandfather, the Warden of Judas College at Oxford. She meets the Duke of Dorset and immediately falls in love with him because of his apparent indifference. To Zuleika all men have been slaves, whom she despised for their servility. When she discovers that the Duke loves her, her own ardor cools at once. The Duke fails to win her, and announces his intention of committing suicide. Zuleika is flattered and charmed by the idea, but begs the Duke to wait another day, for she is anxious to go to the boat-races with him. Meanwhile all the undergraduates have fallen in love with

1 Frances Hackett--Introduction to"Zuleika Dobson", P. 1.
(New York, 1922; Dodd, Mead and Co.)
2 " --Introduction to "Zuleika Dobson", P. 2

her. The Duke warns them all that their love is hopeless. Not to be outdone by his chivalry, however, they vow to die with him. Zuleika, flattered by such extravagant heroism, encourages them. When the wholesale suicide is over, she returns to her room, and, wasting little time on regrets, plans to take a special train to Cambridge. She is already dreaming of new fields to conquer.

Beerbohm ascribes the origin of the story to Clio, the muse of history. Bored by her own prosaic department, and envious of the more glamorous one of her sister, Melpomene, she thought it would be splendid if the historian had the novelist's privileges. Beerbohm was transported from the Oxford train onto Mount Parnassus, where he was endowed with the necessary qualities to carry out Clio's project, and sent forth to follow the tragedy of the Oxford undergraduates.

The outline of the story gives no inkling of the essence of the novel, which is contained in its satire. Above all, "the story parodies the high and ancient truth that the worthiest of men are prone to throw themselves away for the sake of utterly worthless women".[1]

A few chosen quotations may give some idea of Beerbohm's inimitable irony.

The description of Zuleika is a model of litotes:

1 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, P. 68, 69.

"Zuleika was not strictly speaking beautiful. Her eyes were a trifle large, and their lashes longer than they need have been. An anarchy of small curls was her chevelure, a dark upland of misrule, every hair asserting its rights over a not discreditable brow . For the rest, her features were not at all original. The mouth was a mere replica of Cupid's bow, lacquered scarlet, and strung with the littlest pearls. No apple-tree, no wall of peaches had been robbed, nor any Tyrian rose-garden, for the glory of Miss Dobson's cheeks. Her neck was imitation-marble. Her hands and feet were of very mean proportions. She had no waist to speak of."[1]

The hero, the Duke of Dorset, who had never condescended to love any woman, feels himself humiliated at yielding himself to such a plebian passion. "He had always fancied himself secure against any so vulgar peril; always fancied that by him at least, the proud motto of his family--'Pas si bête'--would not be belied."[2]

The Duke refuses to dine with Zuleika because he has promised to dine at the Junta, "the holy of holies", so exclusive that the Duke is the sole remaining member. ("A member of the Junta can do no wrong."[3]) But Zuleika cannot understand "that admirable fidelity to social engagements which is one of the virtues implanted in the members of our aristocracy...The

1 Max Beerbohm--Zuleika Dobson, P. 15, 16.
2 " " , P. 36.
3 " " , P. 126.

thought of being parted from her for a moment was torture to him; but noblesse oblige..."[1]

The Duke is a dandy, a paragon such as only Oxford has been known to produce. The list of his accomplishments is staggering. He possesses all the virtues, it would appear, except humility. Being a dandy, he must banish Zuleika from his mind. "He must not dilute his own soul's essence. He must not surrender to any passion his dandihood. The dandy must be celibate, cloistral; is, indeed, but a monk with a mirror for beads and breviary--an anchorite mortifying his soul, that his body may be perfect."[2]

One of Beerbohm's numerous "devices for freshening the atmosphere"[3] is the personification of inanimate articles of clothing which take on the attributes of their wearer. We have seen this in one of his early essays, "Dandies and Dandies"[4], where Lord X, a true fop, fingers the tape at a racing-club with growing despair, which is revealed in his clothes. His linen flushes and grows pale, his boots lose their lustre, his hat has "little furrows ploughed by Despair".[5] In the same way, the Duke's white pearl-studs change color--one black, one pink, like Zuleika's earrings--when he falls in love. Her earrings likewise change to white when she visits the Duke's rooms, deeply in love with him.

1 Max Beerbohm--Zuleika Dobson, P. 120, 121.
2 " " , P. 40.
3 Dixon Scott--Men of Letters, P. 182.
4 " --The Works.
5 " " , P. 30.

The busts of the Roman Emperors along the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford ("by American visitors frequently mistaken for the Twelve Apostles")[1] stare down at Zuleika and watch the relentless course of the tragedy, grimly fascinated. To his amazement, an old don "who had been reading too much Mommsen"[2] saw great beads of perspiration glistening on the brows of the Emperors.

Zuleika never reads; her experience, she tells the Duke, is obtained at first-hand. Yet he finds her speech has "what is called 'the literary flavour'". "Ah," she explains, "that is an unfortunate trick which I caught from a writer, a Mr. Beerbohm, who once sat next to me at dinner somewhere. I can't break myself of it..."[3]

The first part of the book is so full of good things that it is difficult to choose passages for quotation. It abounds with gems that may be enjoyed apart from the story. Indeed, the story itself is the least important part of the book, despite the quaint humor of its invention. Almost every chapter offers several paragraphs which, like short essays, can be read apart from the narrative. The last half of the book becomes a little tiresome; the brilliance is sustained, but the glitter is so continuous that it is wearing.

1 Max Beerbohm--Zuleika Dobson, P. 11
2 " " "
3 " " , P. 107.

The Duke's eloquent plea to his companions is a fine piece of travesty. "Your fetters have not galled you yet. My wrists, my ankles, are excoriated. The iron has entered into my soul. I droop. I stumble. Blood flows from me. I quiver and curse. I writhe. The sun mocks me. The moon titters in my face. I can stand it no longer. I will no more of it. To-morrow I die."[1] But even this impassioned speech from "the nonpareil"[2] has no effect on them.

Another amusing device which Beerbohm uses is the introduction of the shades of Chopin and George Sand while the Duke plays the piano at a concert. Chopin, beaming enthusiastically at the young man's performance of his Marche Funèbre, remarks to George Sand, "Plus fine que Pachmann." She says firmly, "Tu auras une migraine affreuse." "Laisse-moi le saluer," cries Chopin, struggling in her grasp. "Demain soir, oui. Il sera parmi nous," answers George Sand, hurrying him away, and continuing to herself, "Moi aussi, je me promets un beau plaisir en faisant la connaissance de ce jeune homme."[3]

At the concert Zuleika impulsively performs her conjuring tricks--it is the one way of showing her gratitude--for these young men about to die for her. The Duke's love is not blind; he realizes the banality of her performance. In fact, Beerbohm observes, "she had the sensitiveness, though no other quality whatsoever, of the true artist."[4]

1 Max Beerbohm--Zuleika Dobson, P. 143.
2 " " , P. 144.
3 " " , P. 156.
4 " " , P. 180.

When the fatal day dawns, all nature is in sympathy with the impending disaster:

"Somewhere under cover of them (the clouds) the sun went his way, transmitting a sulphurous heat. The very birds in the trees of the Trinity were oppressed and did not twitter. The very leaves did not whisper.

"Out through the railings, and across the road, prowled a skimpy and dingy cat, trying to look like a tiger.

"It was all very sinister and dismal."[1]

But the Duke, upon reflection, has decided on a much nobler course--to live (a "splendid act of moral courage")[2]--and thus save all Oxford from following his example. Just as he is on his way to tell Zuleika of this plan he receives a telegram from his home; the traditional two black owls (who always appear on the eve before a Tankerton's death) had perched on the battlements. The Duke realizes that he must not postpone his death now--it is inevitable; family tradition must be upheld.

The Duke, dressed "in the full pomp and radiance of his dandyism"[3], leaps from the raft, calling "Zuleika!" The other youths emulously leap headlong into the water. Thus the whole body of undergraduates perish--except one, Noaks, who is later found by Katie (the landlady's daughter) hiding behind the window curtains. Zuleika, overjoyed at the discovery, hails

1 Max Beerbohm--Zuleika Dobson, P. 214.
2 " " , P. 211.
3 " " , P. 281.

the sole surviving youth, "Oh man of my need."[1] But Noaks, ashamed of his cowardice, flings himself from the window.

From this point on, the story flags perceptibly. Beerbohm goes off on another comic tangent. The Batch boy (the landlady's son), Clarence, is the "Messenger" who delivers the awful tale. Unlike his predecessor, the Greek messenger (who "after a run of twenty miles, would always reel off a round hundred of graphic verses unimpeachable in scansion), Clarence was of degenerate mould. He collapsed on to a chair..."[2]

Chapter XXl is sheer burlesque. The opening paragraph describes Zuleika "where it was best that she should be.

"Her face lay upturned on the water's surface, and round it were the masses of her dark hair, half floating, half submerged. Her eyes were closed, and her lips parted. Not Ophelia in the brook could have seemed more at peace.

"Like a creature native and indued unto that element tranquil Zuleika lay."[3] She was taking a bath!

This anti-climax is just a little strained. It is the sort of thing the very young Beerbohm might have written. It is not up to the brilliant irony of the rest of the book.

Zuleika is at last remorseful: "What if the youth of all Europe were moved by Oxford's example,"[4] she thinks, aghast. She decides to take the veil.

1 Max Beerbohm--Zuleika Dobson, P. 332.
2 " " , P. 302.
3 " " , P. 310.
4 " " , P. 340.

When she tells the Warden that the undergraduates are dead, he gasps: "Dead?....What did they die of?" She replies: "Of me...I am an epidemic, grandpa, a scourge, such as the world has not known..."[1]

Zuleika is somewhat comforted on learning that her devastating charm "is a case of sheer heredity".[2] The Warden, too, had had his scores of admirers, and had married the one woman who seemed indifferent to him. "In the matter of affections"[3], he finds that he and Zuleika are "ordinary enough".[3] He confesses that he is proud of her; she must visit him again, later, "not in term-time, though".[4]

Zuleika, disconsolate, resolves to improve her art--at last she has a "purpose".[5] And suddenly, seizing Bradshaw, she looks for the best way to get to Cambridge. After a vain search, she decides to go by a special train. Smiling, she goes to bed, and is soon asleep. This "closing scene, with its menace of further disasters is impeccable".[6]

"Zuleika Dobson" either captivates one completely, or fails to arouse any interest whatsoever. The reader thinks it either "a gay gallopade of mortality and decorative archaism of expression"[7], an irresistible comic epic, or else dismisses it with a shrug, as an inconsequential bit of froth which bores him. There is no lukewarm response to its fantasy.

1 Max Beerbohm--Zuleika Dobson", P. 343.
2 " " , P. 347.
3 " " , P. 348.
4 " " , P. 350.
5 " " , P. 352.
6 E. M. Forster--Aspects of the Novel, P. 174.
7 Francis Hackett--Introduction to Zuleika Dobson, P. 4.

One critic, also a novelist, renders a debatable verdict: ..."The whole effect consists in the sudden substitution of the obvious for the recherché. You thought you were going to have to pretend to enjoy pickled nightingale's tongues, and you find--greatly to your own relief--that it is just ice-cream-and-cake!"[1]

Frank Harris confesses that "Zuleika Dobson" "floored" him, while another critic states conclusively that "Zuleika Dobson" does not "intrigue" him, that Beerbohm himself "knows better than anyone else that, with the best intentions, one cannot ask a ladybird to become a bumblebee."[2] Why not, if the ladybird carries the disguise so gracefully?[3]

1 Floyd Dell--The Borzoi, P. 12. (New York, 1920: Alfred A. Knopf.)
2 Frank Harris--Contemporary Portraits, P. 131.
3 C. Lewis Hind--Authors and I, P. 39, 40.

CHAPTER V11

DRAMATIC CRITICISM

"Around Theatres"[1] represents the best part of Max Beerbohm's dramatic criticism. These essays, collected only recently, are culled from weekly articles for "The Saturday Review", written over a period of twelve years, from 1898 to 1910.

In his prefatory "Note" (Beerbohm never writes anything so formal as a preface) the author describes his entry into dramatic criticism. And a strange entry it was, "informal" and "grossly irregular".[2] Not that Beerbohm had never written anything in the nature of dramatic criticism. Several earlier essays deal with subjects pertaining to the theatre and contain much good criticism of it. However, it was not until the spring of 1898, when Shaw's "Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant" were published, that Beerbohm's ideas about the drama broke out in full force. Previously he had been writing occasionally for the "Saturday Review", "tilting at this or that personage as the fancy seized"[3] him; now the tilting became more fervid than ever. Accordingly, G. B. S. (whose reactions are never the same as anyone else's) wrote him saying that he was "the only man to carry on the business".[4]

While humorously assuming a pose of utter ignorance of dramatic theories, Beerbohm admits that circumstances have made

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, 2 vols. New York, 1930: Alfred A. Knopf.)
2 " --"Note" to Around Theatres.
3 " "
4 " "

him familiar with the theatre; that he is a veritable mine of theatrical gossip; that he knows his way blindfold about all the theatres of London, and "could recite backwards most of the successful plays that have been produced in the last ten years".[1]

When a caricaturist who is an essayist of the first rank and a novelist as well undertakes to write dramatic criticism, what is one to expect? Certainly a special compound of impressionism and wit, which form the essence of the caricaturist's art, and a caustic touch of satire, blended with a sound literary judgment. Beerbohm's airy approach makes him seem never to delve profoundly into any problem or to analyze any theory to the ultimate, yet invariably, with a few bold, incisive strokes (as with his pencil) he gives an outline that suggests more than is apparent. This characteristically deft touch is deceiving; there is considerably more in the fleeting impression than one perceives at a glance.

At times, perhaps, Beerbohm's satirical tendency leads him to stretch a point beyond credulity (as in his essays), the result being more comical than convincing. On the whole, however, he is an eminently sane and just critic, seldom allowing his own preferences to sway his judgments. The same beautiful sense of proportion patent throughout his work is maintained in these dramatic essays. As Shaw's successor, he did not

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 4

represent "the younger generation" who was "knocking at the door".[1] He has always been a conservative, possessing no revolutionary ideas.

Beerbohm's style in his dramatic reviews, as in his other essays, is rambling, richly allusive, replete with personal experiences, predilections and whimsies. The reviews are "grace and leisure itself".[2] One critic complains of a "graceful good humor where art is concerned...The light touch grows into boredom...when it comes to dealing with art".[2] But even this earnest critic agrees that although four-fifths of the reviews are not worth printing, one-fifth expresses Beerbohm's "great good sense and seriousness"[2], his "literary preferences"[2], if not his "artistic passions".[2] Passion is a word that never could be applied to Beerbohm. The zealous reader or critic who looks for fine frenzies or raptures in these essays will be disappointed. But there is plenty of wit, wisdom, and beauty of language; and countless reminiscences which are fascinating to anyone at all interested in the theatre and its personalities. Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Sarah Bernhardt, Eleanora Duse, and many other stars of the 'nineties live in these pages, and while Beerbohm's opinions concerning these personalities may be contestable, he always has something interesting to tell us.

1 George Bernard Shaw--"Valedictory". The Saturday Review, May 21, 1898.
2 New Republic, Dec. 31, 1930. (Stark Young)

In these reviews, as in his other earlier essays, no subject evades Beerbohm's pen. Under the banner of dramatic criticism he introduces an inconceivable variety of topics. There are dissertations on the coldness of the Englishman's emotional organism (a theme on which Beerbohm can be particularly eloquent) and on the force of habit in determining individual tastes, as well as casual flashes on ponderous affairs of state.

Happily for his predilections, our critic begins his new career with a play after his own heart--"Cyrano de Bergerac"[1]. It is a play in which the literary quality is as remarkable as the theatrical technique. The elaborate phraseology, "the Byzantine manner"[2] of Rostand, appeal peculiarly to Beerbohm, who has a great fondness for the curious in any art. He hazards a prophecy--that "Cyrano de Bergerac" is a classic which will never die; that like "Don Quixote" and "Don Juan", Cyrano is the typical hero of romance. Realistic characters, he believes, cannot outlive their generation, for they are typical of only one period. But the romantic hero is for all time; by appealing to the imagination of every age he becomes a beloved personality whose radiance is undimmed by time.

It becomes more and more evident that although Beerbohm is an impressionistic critic who has no radical ideas concerning

1 Reviewed on July 9, 1898.
2 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 8.

the theatre, yet his criticisms reveal some definite theories. Just as he prefers the romantic to the realistic in drama, so in an actor or actress he likes the mysterious, the glamorous, rather than the egotistic or forceful.

Beerbohm is seriously concerned with the art of acting. He puts no faith in Diderot's famous parodox, "Le coeur froid, la tête chaude". but instead distinguishes between the requirements of comedy and tragedy: The comedian appeals to the head; we do not need to be illuded by him to any great extent; but the tragedian's appeal is to the heart; he must touch, thrill, awe us. How, he asks, can we be moved if we are always conscious of the art of the actor? In order to create an illusion, he must fuse himself heart and soul into the part assumed. Since "acting is a form of hypnotic suggestion"[1],(his theory) only when we feel that the actor is identifying himself with his role can we accept the illusion.

We find this theory at work in Beerbohm's reviews at all times, especially when he discusses the qualities of this or that actor or actress. When, for instance, he writes of Sarah Bernhardt, he "misses the weight and magnificence of her impact, but gives you the parlor pleasures of such a display of primeval forces as this jewelled, vain and well rouged planet might afford dilettantes and good diners"[2]. He has small praise for her rôle as Hamlet; she should never have been allowed to play

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 264.
2 New Republic, Dec. 31, 1930. (Stark Young)

Hamlet, he asserts. The best that he can say of her performance "is that she acted (as she always does) with that dignity of demeanor which is the result of perfect self-expression".[1] And the only compliment he vouchsafes is "that her Hamlet was, from first to last, très grande dame."[1]

With regard to Eleanora Duse, "the austerely transcendental",[2] Beerbohm is almost harsh. He seems to have been indifferent to "all that great poetry and realism of the spirit.."[2] of which she was an incarnation. He attacks her disregard of impersonation, her supreme egotism. Without understanding a word of Italian, he sees her performance in "La Gioconda"[3], and is totally unaffected by her personality. He admires her strong, graceful movements,her "little shrill soft voice"[4], and the "power and nobility" of her face, but his "prevailing emotion is hostile to her"[4]. To him she is pre-eminently "a great egoistic force; ..a woman overriding, with an air of sombre unconcern, plays, mimes, critics, and public"[4].

Beerbohm's impressions of Ellen Terry show his preference for the actress who can submerge herself in her rôle. Her "capacity for fundamental emotion"[5], he tells us, exceeded that of "half-a-dozen ordinary women rolled into one"[5].

An illuminating picture of Henry Irving is presented. The great actor steps out of the legendary aloofness that tradition has woven around his dignified personality and becomes

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 49
2 New Republic, Dec. 31, 1930. (Stark Young)
3 In May, 1900.
4 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 102
5 " " , P. 687.

a living human being, with many of the defects of his less glamorous fellow-creatures. The strange, sardonic humor that could so often be cruel, the curious paradox of Bohemianism and dignity, the indefinable magnetism of this "Knight from Nowhere"[1] (as Beerbohm quaintly dubs him, from the title of a book of Pre-Raphaelite poems which he once read) combined to produce one of the greatest geniuses who ever lived. Irving had an "exotic mind"[2], a fondness for pageantry, and "that quality of mystery which is not essential to genius, but which is the surest insurance against oblivion"[3].

In an unforgettable analogy Beerbohm compares and analyzes the genius of three celebrated actresses--Réjane, Sada Yacco, and Sarah Bernhardt. And here again he reveals his own definite preferences. If asked, like Paris, to pass final judgment on one of these three, he confesses that he would render the apple to the Japanese, Sada Yacco, because she is "mysterious"[4] and "remote"[4]. "But," he amends, "perhaps ere I had taken many steps down the mountain-side, I should hesitate, halt, look round, and, as a rider to my judgment, bid Sada Yacco let Réjane and Sarah take each a bite of the apple--Réjane, a big bite; Sarah, a small one"[4].

In some of his earlier essays Beerbohm has glorified the little old-fashioned music hall and its monotonous

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 511
2 " " , P. 516.
3 " " , P. 517.
4 " " , P. 203.

entertainment. Whilst "as far as the theatre is concerned"[1] he is "a beckoner, a progressive",[1] "in the matter of music halls" he is "a staunch, even a passionate reactionary".[1] And to snub the "stripling" whose sneer he anticipates, he unequivocally affirms: "I may be old-fashioned, but I am right. The music hall entertainment ought to be stupid, as surely as the drama ought to be intelligent."[1]

Beerbohm deals with George Bernard Shaw all the way from "Mrs. Warren's Profession" to "Misalliance", and is a shrewd interpreter of the Irishman's genius, perhaps because there is something kindred in spirit between the two men--the one a caricaturist who writes sound criticisms, the other a satirist who writes serious comedies. Beerbohm writes of Shaw with great perspicacity, insight and respect, all seasoned with the customary playfulness. He treats Shaw as a fellow-writer and unhesitatingly uncovers his flaws. As Shaw's "pious successor" on "The Saturday Review", he had no faint torch to carry on.[2] But no one mourned G. B. S. "more inconsolably" than did Beerbohm. "For", he explains, "with all his faults--grave though they are and not to be counted on the fingers of one hand--he is, I think, by far the most brilliant and remarkable journalist in London".[2]

Conscious of his own short-comings, Beerbohm regrets that unlike Shaw, he will "not be able to branch off into discussions

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 382.
2 " " , P. 3.

of ethical, theological or political questions".[1] He regrets, too, his lack of "that well-considered attitude toward life which gave a kind of unity to G. B. S.'s worst inconsistencies about art".[1] And thus, while he outlines his own deficiencies, he very cleverly enumerates the faults of his predecessor.

In his serious plays of modern life, "Shaw depicts life as he conceives it to be, and men and women as he knows them,"[2] and "the result is not satisfactory", for Beerbohm, at least. "He imagines emotion to be an unfortunate and not inevitable nuisance, and reason to be the pivot on which the world should go round. His heroes and heroines are...absolutely rational machines"[2]. The heroines are "dowdy and ill-conditioned shrews--wasps without waists".[3] Mr. Shaw's "touching faith in the efficacy of reason dates him right back into the eighteenth century".[4] He is "a trifle rococo".[4] But Beerbohm is not finding fault with Shaw as he is; he hopes he will always be "just what he is--as delightful in the defects of his qualities as in the qualities themselves".[4] Indeed, he asks: "Who shall say whether his faults or his merits are the more delicious?"[5]

Beerbohm is of the opinion that Shaw is not himself in his serious plays, where he hangs on to "Ibsen's coat-tails".[6]

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P.5.
2 " " , P. 51.
3 " " , P. 151.
4 " " , P. 52.
5 " " , P. 218.
6 " " , P. 150.

These plays are "exceedingly good pastiches of Ibsen".[1] But Shaw's irresponsible sense of humor--"his greatest gift"[1]--proves that he was not born to write serious plays.

As for Shaw's prefaces, notes and stage-directions, Beerbohm finds these "even more delightful than the plays themselves".[2] (We have seen that he parodies a preface, rather than a play, in "A Straight Talk"[3]). He notices "progress"[2] in style, humorously warns Shaw to avoid the pitfall of "so many of our young writers"[4]--paying attention to "manner at the expense of matter"[4]--and to "beware the fascination of archaisms".[4] "On the other hand", he concludes patronizingly, "I am glad to find in his prefaces evidence that he has just been reading Plato. To quote Plato freely...is a very proper habit in a young writer."[4] Thus Beerbohm, at twenty-nine years of age, gives advice to Shaw, the "young writer" of forty-five.[5]

Beerbohm's estimate of Shaw is shrewd. It is Shaw's genius as a writer that he likes best--something he misses in other contemporary playwrights. Mr. Shaw thinks he is "a true delineator of life".[6] "But that", says Beerbohm, "is one of his delightful hallucinations...In fact, Mr. Shaw is not a creator. He cannot see beyond his own nose."[6] Though his "chief aim is to

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 150.
2 " " , P. 152.
3 " --A Christmas Garland.
4 " --Around Theatres, P. 153.
5 " " , P. 149.
6 " " , P. 218.

proselytize, we enjoy his preaching for its own sake, without reference to conviction...He is not a serious man trying to be frivolous. He is a serious man who cannot help being frivolous."[1] Beerbohm has the peculiar knack of precisely analyzing the qualities of a writer.

Considering that he has dedicated "Around Theatres" to Gordon Craig, the revolutionary in scenic art, Beerbohm's eulogy of this artist is remarkably restrained. With his customary sinuous indirectness when attacking anyone, Beerbohm intimates that only the monstrous indifference of the English could fail to be aroused by the strange and lovely experiments of Gordon Craig. Already in 1902, Beerbohm understood Craig's genius, pronouncing him superb for children's pantomime or Maeterlinck's fantastic plays. Today the pronouncement still holds, for, while Craig has designed innumerable sets for almost every type of production, his highly-conventionalized style has been found impracticable for the usual type of theatre. But there is no aspect of scenic design which does not show his influence; his imagination has penetrated every phase of the theatre.

Beerbohm discusses many other subjects about the theatre, and other matters not pertaining directly to it, in the pages of "Around Theatres". His approach is always the same--highly

1 Max Beerbohm--Around Theatres, P. 220.

egotistic, quiet, humorous, and wise. A brief perspectus of Max Beerbohm as a dramatic critic is puzzling; he is the same "incomparable Max" as we have found him to be in his essays, stories, and parodies. He is essentially the man of letters who brings to his knowledge and impressions of the theatre all the personal prejudices of his literary tastes, and innumerable, invaluable reminiscences of the theatre. His is the humor of the caricaturist softened by the unbiassed viewpoint of the man of the world. This individual blend of qualities lends to his criticism a rich, peculiar soundness, which is permeated by an irresistible vein of humor. While we may often disagree with many of his personal convictions, we admire the fundamental logic of his statements. But what we admire most of all is his style; his prose is a superb mingling of gaiety and seriousness, erudition and whimsy; it fairly ripples along, fascinating us by its very special magic of words.

CHAPTER V111

THE CARICATURE

It has often been held that caricature has not flourished in England. One writer imputes this to the English "national love of compromise and...respect for authority"[1]. Another explains[2] that the art of caricature appeals directly to the eye, and hence is so little understood in England, where people see with their ears, rather than with their eyes. Bohun Lynch disagrees[3] with this opinion, and points out that the English caricaturists of the eighteenth century made as good use of their eyes as of their ears, and that even in those days there was a widespread appreciation of the art. However, as recently as 1904, we find another critic[4] remarking that the English nation is rarely vouchsafed the blessing of caricature, and that the English public owed Max a great debt of gratitude, since he was England's one and only caricaturist.

Since these statements were made, the situation has greatly changed. England can no longer be accused of not appreciating the art of caricature or of not producing good caricaturists. "Max", the caricaturist, is almost a figure of the past; his successors are numerous and many of them far superior to him.

1 Bohun Lynch--A History of the Caricature, P. 8. (London, 1926: Faber & Gwyer). Lynch quotes Mr. James Bone, in "The Manchester Guardian".

2 " --A History of Caricature, P. 8. (Lynch quotes Mr. Oliver Onions in his appreciation of the works of Henry Ospovat, 1911.)

3 " --A History of Caricature, P. 8.

4 Athenaeum, May 28, 1904.

After the first decade of the nineteenth century, comic art, rather than caricature, flourished in England. It was not until 1868, when "Vanity Fair" was founded by Thomas Gibson Bowles, that true caricature came into its own again. The name of Carlo Pellegrini ("Ape") is always associated with "Vanity Fair". He was its first outstanding contributor, the greatest caricaturist of the Victorian era. His influence over Beerbohm is inestimable, and there is marked similarity in the quality of their work. The walls of Beerbohm's rooms, wherever he happened to be, were hung with Pellegrini prints. Pellegrini, like Beerbohm, was a dandy, "who invariably wore white spats and immensely long finger-nails, like a Chinese mandarin".[1] He drew almost entirely from memory, as does Beerbohm. Most of the great statesmen of his day--Gladstone, Disraeli, the Earl of Derby, and others--were his victims. He was invariably fair, sometimes a little acid, always amusing. We find the same characteristics in the work of his successor, Beerbohm.

Max contributed very little to "Vanity Fair". His best-remembered drawing for that magazine was a drawing of George Meredith.[2] This caricature is considered the best ever done of Meredith (just as "Euphemia Clashthought" was judged to be the best parody of Meredith). In fact, Beerbohm's drawing is said

1 Bohun Lynch--A History of Caricature, P. 70.
2 This drawing appeared in "Vanity Fair" in Sept. 1896.

to be better than any of the portraits. The leonine head of Meredith is drawn with remarkable fidelity.

Caricature is usually a passing phase of most artists; either they outgrow it or indulge in it as a recreation, unless they become superlative masters of it. Just as a serious writer will often amuse himself with a bit of nonsense (like Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland") or a composer with a musical joke (such as Saent-Saens' "Circus"), so does a painter occasionally turn to caricature for relaxation.

Beerbohm, however, never passed through any phase but that of caricature. He tells us that while writing was always a task for him, he turned to drawing for recreation. From the beginning he drew caricatures only, and never bothered much about acquiring good draughtsmanship until long after his reputation as a caricaturist was widespread. His graphic art is as good as his literary, and of the same genre. It is a complement to his writings; in both mediums he is a satirist, and it is well-nigh impossible to separate "the sheep from--the sheep"[1] in forming an estimate of the artist.

Long before he thought of writing, Max drew pictures. He drew when he was a small boy, for the pure fun of it. Drawing always came easily with him, and his drawings are infinitely more numerous than his writings. Many of his caricatures have appeared in periodicals, and have been collected for publication in book form. Many were exhibited publicly before being printed

1 Bohun Lynch--Max Beerbohm in Perspective, Preface, P. xii.

in any publication, while others which have been exhibited have never been printed. During the 'nineties, one of the much-anticipated events of the year was the annual exhibition of drawings by Max. All the celebrities would go, wondering who was the butt of Max's wit that time, or whether he had victimized himself, as he was in the habit of doing.

Drawing from memory, as Beerbohm has always done, accounts in some measure for his uncanny success with intimately known faces; only the most striking features are remembered and hence emphasized, while the rest fades into the background and is forgotten.

Like comedy, which heightens the absurdities of life and is thus a mirror for its defects; like poetry, which is often a "criticism of life", so too, caricature, by clever exaggeration, holds the mirror up to nature. The florid art of the Georgian age was a perfect criticism of the coarseness of that day, just as the modern smartness is the most fitting commentary of a sophisticated age. Max represents a mean between the elegance of the nineties and the present mood of casual scorn. His work is a sort of historical commentary on the social and literary life of his time; on the political situation, also, to some extent; and on the past, too, for he was not content with drawing on his contemporaries for his themes.

Max has some definite theories in regard to caricature and its technique. He defines caricature as "the art of exaggerating, without fear or fervor, the peculiarities of this or that human body, for the mere sake of exaggeration".[1] The laughter aroused by a caricature, he explains, is "merely aesthetic",[2] just as the tears caused by seeing the statue of Venus. While tragedy "purges us of superfluous awe, by evocation",[3] similarly comedy purges us of superfluous contempt. The perfect caricature is the outcome of study, maintains Max; "it is the epitome of its subject's surface, the presentment of his most characteristic pose, gesture, and expression".[4] Other writers may disagree with this thesis, but Max has shown its truth in his own work. For him "the most perfect caricature is that which, on a small surface, with the simplest means, most accurately exaggerates, to the highest point, the peculiarities of a human being, at his most characteristic moment, in the most beautiful manner".[5]

Max's first public appearance as a caricaturist took place in 1892, when the "Strand Magazine" published in an inconspicuous

1 Max Beerbohm--A Variety of Things, "The Spirit of Caricature, P. 119.
2 " A Variety of Things, " P. 125.
3 " " " "
4 " A Variety of Things, " P. 128.
5 " A Variety of Things, " P. 130.

place in three different months "Club Types", drawn by "H. Maxwell Beerbohm". Everyone agreed that the "Club Types" were very original.

From 1894 to 1895 Max contributed regularly to "Pick-Me-Up", occasionally to "The Yellow Book Magazine" and "The Survey". All these drawings, however, belong to a probationary period, as did also the drawings collected in the first few books of caricatures--"The Poets' Corner"(1904) and "The Second Childhood of John Bull"(1911). The drawings for the latter book were made ten years before publication.

"A Book of Caricatures", published in 1907, showed great advance. Here Beerbohm used a quill pen for the first time. Up to that time he had been using a pencil and a fine pen. The latter medium was not his best, but he was much more at home with the pencil.

One notable caricature, made in 1899, (probably just after Beerbohm's visit to Swinburne described in "No. 2, The Pines", in "And Even Now"), bears a remarkable resemblance to one of the same poet by Pellegrini, in an 1874 number of "Vanity Fair".

Max drew personal and individual caricatures better than group pictures. His subjects seem to have been the same then as in later years. In the 1913 exhibition, one drawing deals with "The Grave Misgivings of the Nineteenth Century and the wicked amusement of the Eighteenth, watching the Progress (or

whatever it is) of the Twentieth. The eighteenth century is drawn as an elegant dandy, smiling sardonically. The nineteenth century is a stout, mild, elderly gentleman with whiskers. The twentieth century wears the dress of an aviator and rushes desperately across the picture.[1]

In 1921 another exhibition shows a similar idea. There are three drawings--the Future beheld respectively by the Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Centuries. The eighteenth century sees but a copy of his contented and exquisite self. The nineteenth is a stouter, richer, more important self. The twentieth is a young man who has lost an arm in the war, pale, careworn; he looks into the future and sees only a vague mark of interrogation.[2]

The exhibition of 1923, held at the Leicester Galleries, showed a series of caricatures aimed at royalty. Max, the impeccable, was for the first time accused of "bad taste" and "vulgarity".[3] Actually the caricatures were no more than good-humored jibes at a prince who had enjoyed more popularity and esteem than his character warranted. One cartoon showed the favorite prince, Edward, marrying his landlady's daughter, in 1927, at some registry-office. The title was "Long Choosing and Beginning Late". The whole series "represented the gradual

1 This drawing is to be found in "Fifty Caricatures", published in 1913, by Wm. Heinemann, London.
2 This drawing is in "A Survey", published in 1921, by Doubleday, Page and Co., New York.
3 Literary Digest, June 30, 1923. (The English papers are quoted).

expansion of a pale, over-tutored youth into a heavy, shrewd man of pleasure, with an exquisite changing feminine figure in the background of each decade, and in the last caricature we saw King Edward as he seems to the generation of 1920--haloed and playing a harp in heaven. The drawing gave particular offense...It is astonishing that people did not see that the satire was not directed against King Edward, but against the folly of canonizing him."[1] The whole affair caused great excitement and Max begged the proprietors of the galleries to withdraw the offending pictures at once.

Max was not welcomed as a caricaturist as readily as he had been as a young writer. His work was truly satirical, and England had so long been content to laugh at the harmless sallies of "Punch" and the "amiable likenesses of 'Vanity Fair'"[2] that Max was accused of seeing only the ugly side of people. But Max was the born satirist; he did not see the ugly side of anything or anyone; he "drew, not with malice nor yet with kindness, but with the intuition of a creative artist; he drew neither portraits nor poetical compositions, but caricatures, and satirical cartoons."[2]

It took the public some time to get used to Max as a caricaturist; he was much too subtle for ready comprehension and

1 Literary Digest, June 30, 1923. (Quoted from an article by Desmond MacCarthy in "The New Statesman", London.)
2 William Rothenstein--Men and Memories, P. 369.

his work constituted a "revival of caricature in a country that had practically lost the art of personal satire in pictures--and the taste for it."[1] One remark is somewhat representative of the general sentiment toward Max. A woman told him that his caricatures were not like the people--but that the people were really like the caricatures. "After glancing at his masterly efforts, it is impossible to see the living victims otherwise than through his own formula."[2] We have only to see the "formulae" for Swinburne, Meredith, Rossetti, and Gosse to understand their ineffaceable impression.

There are nine volumes of Max's caricatures, ranging from the early "Caricatures of Twenty-five Gentlemen", published in 1896, to "Observations", published in 1925. "Fifty Caricatures", published in 1913, is perhaps the best-known of all Max's work. The drawings in this book are not as spontaneous as those of the earlier group, but contain some brilliant work, and their general satire appeals to a wide public. The drawings in later books show much improvement in draughtsmanship. "Rossetti and His Circle", published in 1922, contains many drawings which are almost portraits.

According to Bohun Lynch, who has made a thorough study of Max's work, "A Survey" contains the caricaturist's most

1 Holbrook Jackson--The Eighteen-Nineties, P. 151.
2 The Critic, Nov., 1901. (Arthur Lawrence).

important drawings--a series of nine pictures symbolizing the relative positions of England, France, and Germany from the time of the Napoleonic wars to the present day. "John Bull, in turn, is apprehensive, prosperous, more prosperous, youthfully courageous in 1914, and haggard under a load of debt in the period after the war. Germany grows and grows in truculence and robustness, only to end as a suppliant beggar, out at knees and elbows; and France, who began with eagle nose and the huge sabre of the first Napoleon, passes through varying stages of fortune and misfortune until she is seen thin, rapacious but very dominant, with the false beak imitating the real one of the first Napoleon, emaciated, huge. That is a solid contribution to history."[1]

From the many caricatures of Max we all choose favorites, according to our predilections. His subjects range from political drawings which are not all topical to literary drawings which are often "for all time". To many admirers, "Rossetti and His Circle" will remain Max's greatest work. It is a veritable historical reconstruction, a masterpiece of a rare kind. The drawings (made in 1916 and 1917 and published in 1922) are in water-color, and though many of the personalities were unknown to Max, the likenesses are unmistakeable.

1 Bohun Lynch--A History of Caricature, P. 104, 105.

Max caricatures the same people whom he parodies in his writings. We find again and again the same victims as those in "A Christmas Garland"--Shaw, Bennett, Meredith, Moore, Hardy, James, Conrad, Hewlett, Wells, Kipling, and Gosse, to name a few.

In "Observations", the most recent collection,[1] there is a series called "The Old and the Young Self", in which Gosse, Wells, Kipling, Conrad, Moore, Bennett, Shaw, and others are caricatured. The drawing of Moore is interesting in its similarity to the parody in the "Christmas Garland". Moore's young self says: "And have there been no painters since Manet?" The old self replies: "None". The young self questions: "Have there been no composers since Wagner?" Old Self: "None". Young Self: "No novelists since Balzac?" Old Self: "One". The answer is to be found in the parody.

G. B. S.'s old self speaks to his young self very thoughtfully: "Strange! You strike me as frivolous, irreligious, and pert; full of a ludicrous faith in mankind and in the efficacy of political propaganda; squalidly needy in circumstances and abominably ill-dressed...And I used to think you quite perfect."

"Fifty Caricatures"[2] contains a caricature of Thomas Hardy "Composing a Lyric". Hardy's doleful countenance, huge head,

1 Published in 1925, by Wm. Heinemann Ltd., London.
2 " " 1913, " " " " .

and altogether mournful appearance is in perfect harmony with the desolate landscape, and the whole is a perfect complement to "A Sequellula to 'The Dynasts'".[1]

The Four Ages of Modern Literature have been well summarized by Beerbohm--"if modern literature may be said to begin with the Victorian Age"[2]--in a group of pictures in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge:

"The Victorian Age: It is so.

The Nineties: It is not so.

The Edwardian Age: Is it so?

The Georgian Age: Let's find out.

Many critics have complained of the long notes which invariably accompany the caricatures of Max, decreeing that a good caricature should need no explanatory words. But Max's comments are an inseparable part of his work; they are not explanatory, but complementary, and add immeasurably to the drawings.[3] Anyone who loves "fun with a sting in it" will appreciate the combined satire of words and pictures.

Max has often been accused of malice in his caricatures, as well as in his writings. If there is malice in his work, "there is nothing that provokes and sharpens wit like malice".[4] Max's wit aims at the universal type, rather than at the individual. Just as in his parodies, he attacks more than a ridiculous

1 The parody on Thomas Hardy in "A Christmas Garland".
2 Manly and Rickert--Contemporary British Literature, P. 5 (New York, 1921: Harcourt, Brace and Co.)
3 Holbrook Jackson--The Eighteen-Nineties, P. 150, 151.
4 Samuel Butler--Wit and Folly.

characteristic, revealing the very essence of his victims, so in his caricatures he achieves an exposure which is more than an exaggerated likeness--it is a subtle interpretation which piques the imagination.

Max has the power to portray types of character as skilfully as did Keene, Cruikshank and Rowlandson, and he has more--a subtle insight into character and events which is almost uncanny at times. "He is able to give, in the best of his caricatures, aided by the written description or dialogue which invariably accompanies them, a complete impression of some man's character, appearance, aims, mannerisms, of everything, in fact, about him..."[1] And the impression lingers in the memory, so that whatever he characterizes becomes more real than the original.

"Max" the caricaturist is the most widely known rôle of this many-sided artist. It is a rôle which corresponds in every phase to his writings in their various forms, and just as his phrases form an inseparable accompaniment to his drawings, so do his drawings supplement his essays, parodies, and stories. "His integrity as an artist" equals "his fastidiousness as a writer".[2] The pictures seem but a continuation of the written work; they have the same irresistible qualities of wit, subtlety, elegance, and keen knowledge of the foibles of the strong. His art is to caricature strength by picking out its weak points. "Max" the caricaturist and Beerbohm the suave essayist have the gift of unerring precision, of going straight to the essence of the person or the idea, and of turning it inside out for our amusement.

1 John Rothenstein--The Artists of the Eighteen-Nineties, P.207.

2 William Rothenstein--Men and Memories, P. 369.

CONCLUSION

What place does Max Beerbohm hold amongst the moderns? It is perhaps too soon to judge. A writer and caricaturist whose work is concerned largely with other writers and with literary themes depends (like the ivy upon the oak) on the reputations of these writers and the interest taken in these themes. As long as G. B. S., George Moore, Thomas Hardy, George Meredith and many other great personalities of the 'nineties (who figure prominently in Beerbohm's writings) provoke interest, so long, at least, will the satire of Beerbohm provide amusement.

It is evident that Beerbohm does not belong to the present decade. He is definitely of the Beardsley period; he loves the old order and deplores the passing of the old regime. The old-fashioned music-hall, the charm of "the graces", the Victorian tyranny and discipline for children, the ugly yet dignified old buildings of London, the "grand manner" of our great orators of the past--all these he celebrates in his essays, and sighs because they are no more.

Max Beerbohm is read but little by the younger generation. They cannot re-live "the good old days" or delight in his tender reminiscences of times they never knew. His stories appeal to them most, but even these are dated; their appeal is to a gradually diminishing public. More and more Max has become

the "caviare"of literature for the few who love to linger over his "precious" style.

Max has not tried to conform to new methods of style or subject matter. He has written very little of late years, and that little is in the manner of his earlier work. It is the enduring quality of his prose which marks him quite definitely as a classic--a seldom read and not very colossal classic, but a classic nevertheless.

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May 21, 1898

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January, 1925

Max Beerbohm's Caricatures

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The Happy Hypocrite

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January 30, 1923

Max flings a Paint-pot at Royalty

May 23, 1925

Max again stirring the Broth

Literary Review

December 15, 1923

Harlequin's Pirouette

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Alas, Poor Max!

February 3, 1923

Finding Max

January 6, 1925

Max makes an Exhibition of his Contemporaries

February 15, 1927

Visit to Max

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January 30, 1915

Max Beerbohm, Writer

May 4, 1918

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May 17, 1922

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December 31, 1930

Max and the Theatre

July 6, 1921

Exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in London of Max Beerbohm's Newest Caricatures

Yale Review

January, 1924

Humor of Max Beerbohm

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Tales of Three Nations (Cartoons)

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13 volumes, 1894-1897.

A LIST OF BOOKS BY MAX BEERBOHM

REFERRED TO IN THIS THESIS

A Christmas Garland	London, 1921: Wm. Heinemann
And Even Now	London, 1920: Wm. Heinemann
Around Theatres (2 vols.)	New York, 1930: Alfred A. Knopf
A Variety of Things	New York, 1928: Alfred Knopf London, 1928: Wm. Heinemann
More	London, 1899: John Lane, The Bodley Head
Seven Men	London, 1919: Wm. Heinemann
Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree: Some Memories of Him and of His Art, collected by Max Beerbohm.	London, no date: Hutchinson & Co., Second Edition.
Yet Again	London, 1910: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., Seventh Edition.
The Happy Hypocrite	Girard, Kansas, no date: Haldeman-Julius Co., Little Blue Book No.595.
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Things New and Old	London, 1923: Wm. Heinemann

Max Beerbohm: An Appreciation is a comprehensive survey of the writings of Max Beerbohm, English essayist, novelist, caricaturist, and dramatic critic. Inasmuch as only one book has been written on Beerbohm, and as this book, published in 1921, leaves much opportunity for understanding and appreciation, the information contained in this thesis has been gleaned from various periodicals and books on the eighteen-nineties. The work of research has been, to a great extent, a problem of sifting and examining a vast amount of material, since critical bibliographies of Max Beerbohm are extremely incomplete.

Since 1928, when "A Variety of Things" was published, Max Beerbohm, for many years in retirement, has written very little. In caricature, too, the public has seen nothing new by "Max" for many years.

This thesis aims to give an adequate account of the significance of Max Beerbohm. His output, though small, is of undeniable importance for its historic interest and of enduring fascination for its intrinsic literary quality.